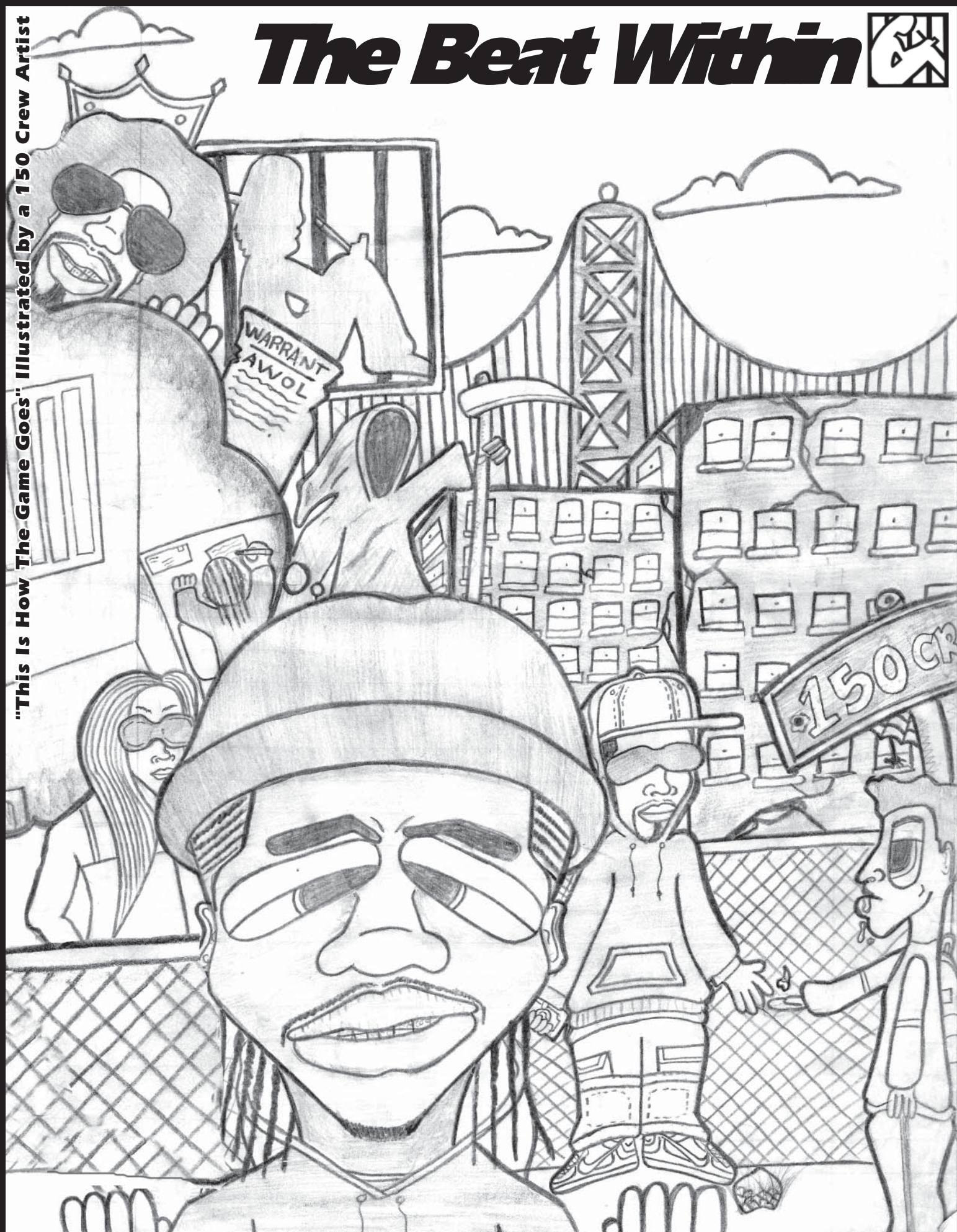


"This Is How The Game Goes" Illustrated by a 150 Crew Artist

The Beat Within



Those of us who work at The Beat do so because we can't think of anything else we'd rather be doing. Yes, it can be exhausting, depressing, infuriating and maddening. But it is also uplifting, inspiring, thrilling, and satisfying in the way that doing good work is always satisfying. But all of us come to this work from different backgrounds. There are social workers, graphic artists, former addicts, former wards of the CYA, and writers. Assistant Editor Michael Kroll is in the last category, a professional writer. As the former Director of The Death Penalty Information Center, he has focused most of his writing on the subject of the death penalty. What follows is a piece he has written for Pacific News Service (not yet published) about how the death penalty hurts more than just the prisoner on the table. Because PNS limits the word count of stories, it will be cut substantially. What you'll read below (if you read it at all) is the full version. (Actually, it's already been cut by the writer — at least four suicides of executioners were eliminated from this version in the hopes of reaching the correct word count...)

Although this story deals specifically with the brutalizing effect the death penalty has on everyone, it might just as well be read to include all the barbarities that occur in our criminal justice system, from juvenile halls, through state youth prisons like CYA, to county jails, and finally state and federal prisons. The stories will be different, but the point will be the same: Our criminal justice system is more criminal than justice, and all of us pay a price for its operation in dollars, and much, much more. So here's his story:

Even before Joseph Clark struggled grotesquely, groaning through the 90 minutes it took Ohio executioners to put him out of his misery on May 2, the courts had already refocused our attention on the evolving methods we employ in our efforts to find a humane way to put a human being to death. The method du jour, lethal injection, has replaced such methods (still in use) as hanging, lethal gas and the electric chair in 37 of the 38 states that have the death penalty, and it is also the method chosen by the United States government.

Among other reasons, challenges to the particular chemicals used in the lethal cocktail as violating the ban against cruel and unusual punishment have resulted in eleven stays of execution since the beginning of the year. Eleven others were executed over the same period, despite their challenges.

One of those stays was in California in the case of Michael Morales. Until issues in his case are resolved in an evidentiary hearing now scheduled by Federal Judge Jeremy Fogel for September, there can be no executions in California. In January, the U.S. Supreme Court stayed the execution of Clarence Hill in Florida to consider whether or not he has the right to challenge that state's lethal injection protocol in civil court. In North Carolina, Patrick Moody was among the eleven unlucky ones. He became the state's 41st casualty of lethal injection on May 17, though the first to have a court-ordered monitor attached to his temple to ensure that he was not conscious while the drugs killed him.

In Professor Robert Johnson's seminal 1997 book about those who carry out today's executions, *Death Work, A Study of the Modern Execution Process*, he makes the point that each member of the modern execution team is trained to do a discrete task, like securing an ankle or a wrist, and then repeatedly drilled so that the task becomes automatic, like robots carrying out a pre-programmed task. The robot is not programmed to kill a person, but only to strap down his ankle.

But executioners are not robots, and things happen to them, especially when what they've rehearsed is not what's played out. Will those terrible groans of Joseph Clark — or the sight of him raising his head and shaking it while yelling, "It don't work!" — affect the men and women in that room? Will it affect the warden and his staff? The guards? The witnesses? And if so, how? And for how long?

Some still alive today are haunted by the ghost of 15-year-old Willie Francis who survived his attempted electrocution in Louisiana in 1947, burned and smoking; no one who was there will forget how, in 1983, Jimmy Lee Gray died "banging his head against a steel pole in the gas chamber while the reporters counted his moans (eleven, according to the Associated Press)"; some witnesses fainted as they watched William Landry's execution team take 14 minutes to reinsert the lethal needle after it popped out of his vein — after the deadly drugs had begun to do their work; in 1990, the head of Jesse Talefero burst into flame as he died in Florida's electric chair. There are literally dozens of examples of botched jobs, and unexpected horrors scattered among every method of execution.

But even when the executions go as planned, the potential effects on those involved cannot be minimized. The state of Florida, for example, provides for post-execution counseling for members of the execution team in its "Methods of Executions and Protocol." Most capital punishment states, including California, offer counseling services to all execution witnesses — except those connected by blood or love to the condemned. But as one who has witnessed his friend's execution by lethal gas, I can confirm that the experience is deeply traumatic and long-lasting.

In the radio documentary, "Witness to an Execution," produced in 2000 by South Portraits Productions and first aired on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," a number of men who had been part of Texas' very busy execution process, agreed to sit and recall their experiences. Among them was Fred Allen who, after participating in 130 executions as a member of the state's "tie down" team, suddenly found himself collapsing emotionally. "I started shaking," he remembered, "and tears — uncontrollable tears — was coming out of my eyes... And I just thought about that execution that I did two days ago, and everybody else that I was involved with... and it just — everybody — all of these executions all of a sudden sprung forward..."

Huntsville Warden Jim Willet, who presided over approximately 75 of the 152 executions carried out when George Bush was the state's governor, noted, "We've carried out a lot of executions here lately... Sometimes I wonder whether people really understand what goes on down here and the effects it has on us."

Former Mississippi Warden and latter-day death penalty abolitionist Donald Cabana described the aftermath of being part of the gassing of Edward Earl whom he had come to befriend, in Ivan Solotaroff's *The Last Face You'll Ever See: The Private Life of the American Death Penalty*. "I was in the shower two hours later, scrubbing and scrubbing. Then I showered again. I just couldn't get the sweat and grime off me to the point where I felt clean enough to go to sleep."

In the 1990s, when Louisiana had just 40 people awaiting death as opposed to the 87 it has now, the Australian version of the news magazine "60 Minutes" did an episode titled "The Executioner" about Louisiana's good of boy executioner they called Sam Jones. At that time, Jones, an electrician by trade, had electrocuted 18 men and boys. In this fascinating interview, Jones appears to embody the "good German" banality of evil mentality, telling the interviewer that he'd pull out fingernails or execute his own son if that's what he was told to do. With straight face he says, "It's no difference to me executing somebody than going to the refrigerator and getting a beer out of it." He insists that he "sleeps like a baby" following every execution.

But when the interview moves to his house, it becomes clear that sleeping is not the only thing he does following every execution... he also paints — masks of horror on canvas! The interviewer describes them as "Dark, morbid paintings, that seem to capture the essence of death itself." True to his public image, Sam Jones denies any connection between what he does at work and what he paints at home immediately afterwards. "I just call it paint on canvas," he deadpans. "They don't really represent anything." But then his own mask slips a little, and he adds, "It's an outlet... people jog..."

At this point the interviewer interrupts, "People jog and you draw pictures of death and execute people."

"Well," Sam draws, "I draw pictures and I execute people." But after a moment, he allows, "It's my way of relief... the pictures..."

Beyond the actual chambers of death, how far do the ripples go? Do they extend to the jurors who serve in capital cases and about whom more and more empirical evidence is gathering of long-term effects? To the DA and defense attorneys on both sides? To the multiple layers of judges? And ultimately to us, the indirect spectators?

These are questions that seldom get asked as we understandably focus on the much narrower legal question of whether the condemned suffers a cruel or unusual death. But they are questions very much worth examining. They are among the questions that former California governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown considered in his book, *Public Justice Private Mercy*, A Governor's Education on Death Row. During his tenure (1958-1966), California put thirty-six individuals to death, but the governor spared the lives of twenty-three others who were condemned to die. As he looked back near the end of his life and considered those 59 individuals, he wrote:

"I am 83 years old as I write these words... And looking back over their names and files now, despite the horrible crimes and the catalog of human weakness they comprise, I realize that each decision took something out of me that nothing — not family or work or hope for the future — has ever been able to replace."

Thank you Michael Kroll. On behalf of all readers of this editorial we thank you for thinking of us and educating us all on the cruelty of the death penalty. We're always listening!

This week the topics address in our workshops leading up to the writing was, "When Do You Know It's All On You?" - Part of growing up for all of us is realizing, sooner or later, that we are responsible for ourselves. When we're babies, we're totally dependent on adults to care for us. But little by little, adults care for us less and we care for ourselves more. Then one day it hits us that we're going to be responsible for ourselves, that we're going to have to make it on our own.

Do you remember when it hit you that would soon be totally responsible for yourself, that you would soon be an adult? How did it hit you when you realized? Did it change anything about how you live, or how you plan to live? Is it exciting to think you're on your own, or is it scary — or maybe a little of both? How will your life be different once it's all on you?

Our second topic, "What's Your Definition Of 'Keepin' It Real?'" - We hear so many of you speak about "Keepin' it real," but we don't have a very clear idea of what "Keepin' it real" actually means. In fact, we often get the feeling that it means something different to everyone who uses it. Does it mean always telling the truth? Or does it mean sticking to the "rules" of the streets or the "rules" of the game at all times? Or does it mean something different? Do you always "keep it real?" When do you? When don't you? What The Beat wants to know is what you mean when you say, "I'm keepin' it real!"

Lastly, "Are You Dying To Live, Or Just Live To Die?" - Living life in the game, in the fast lane, on the block create conditions that might make a person likely to do all sorts of things in the name of greed, with no consideration for others, or even value for life itself. On the other hand, there are those players in the game who do what they have to do in order to survive — even things that might violate their own moral codes of conduct. What we are trying to figure out is whether you have just given up and are willing to risk your own life or someone else's in order to pursue fortune and fame, or whether you are the player who's in the game because of what you think of as necessity, but really wish you lived a different kind of life, free of drama and just living decently. Tell us your story. Are you living to die or dying to live?

OK, before we run allow us once again to reintroduce our latest editorial note writing contest, which as we stated in the last issue will be continued/open through the month of May, given our mailing has been very sporadic. Forgive us. The topic remains, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

Like we said, this contest is open to all Beat writers. All submissions need to be in by the end of May, 2006. We will always honor pieces that come in up to a week late. The First-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each. Best of luck writers, in telling us your written story/poem that relates to turning back the hands of time.

Before we call it an editorial note, lets congratulate our latest POW winners: From Marin we have Heater with three POWs, and Scorpion. From the 150 Crew we have D, Jake, Viet, Lil' Toot and Big Vic. From SF/YGC we have Young B, Elvin, Nuke and last but not least Angela from Arizona.

OK, this issue goes out to Krista Kim, 'cause she's been here! And you ask who is Krista, well, she is our oldest intern, we think. Hmmm.... Anyhow, thanks for the dedication and loyalty you have to The Beat Within Krista. This one is for you. Smile. See you all next week!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

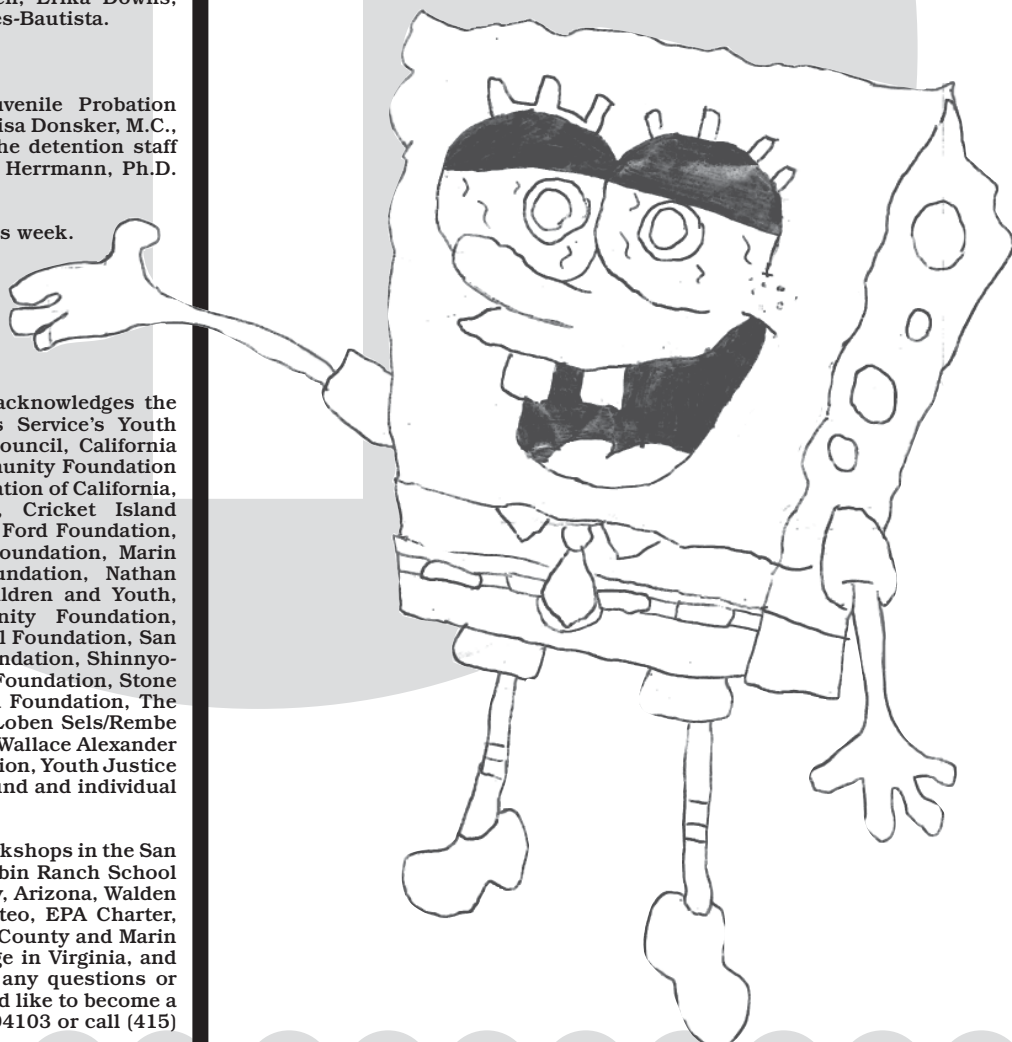
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www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note	2
Pieces of the Week	4
Co-Pieces of the Week	9
Standouts	11
San Mateo	21
Weekly Writings	25
The Beat Without	36



Is It Just A Coincidence I Go To Sleep Crying At Night?

Torment full of happiness and wonder,
 in a world of sacred death
 What is that even supposed to mean
 to a lil' girl in a big mess?
 Nothing; because of you, it's just words on paper
 But they're emotions spilling out,
 like vodka without a chaser
 Because this ink burns my throat with thoughts
 But it also coats this paper, with everything it's not
 But what is it?
 An alphabet's lyrical tune,
 whispering words through rain?
 Or a therapist
 who'll do what it takes to say you're insane?
 If that's what it is, then maybe I'm crazy
 But bullshhh like that doesn't faze me
 I'm in a corner; my heart scarred and broken
 Just like that; a tear shed, voices silent or spoken
 Paper on the table, a pen in my hand
 If Satan was in my situation, even he'd be damned
 It's nice being comfortable,
 using words to understand my life
 But how can you, if I can't understand it myself?
 Holy devils, tormented angels--same thing, right?
 Or is it just some coincidence that I go to sleep crying at
 night?
 Praying to God, asking Him to make things okay
 Telling Him I'm sorry for the sins
 I've committed today
 And yesterday, from forever ago
 Telling Him I didn't mean to, you know
 Disappoint Him...
 I'm sorry

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: We can feel the anguish you express in your poems. We hope this is the time where you get to the root of the problem while sobering up and staying clean from the drugs that are slowly killing you and keeping you away from the real joys of life.



I Choose My Destiny

Life is important to me for various reasons
 I choose my destiny, but God chooses the seasons
 Crafting all of us by breathing the breath of life
 Knowing exactly where every star is at night
 My loves and my losses are imperative to me
 Your love and my loss is the hardest thing to see
 Perhaps I will find perfection somewhere else
 Until then, you are on my mind, and that helps
 So many people never find love of another woman
 Some do,
 but they ignore the love and keep on hummin'
 You affected me in a way that most never get
 And nobody should be able to understand it
 Not only am I wrong, I'm sick and twisted
 Days and weeks ago, I had a chance and I missed it
 For one brief moment before I started the act
 Unclear why, God gave me a chance to turn back
 Can't explain what or why I didn't listen
 Kicked the thought out of my head
 and kept on kissin'
 Made the worst decision of my life
 when I pushed my hips
 You looked so sad, tears running down rosy red lips
 But I learned a lesson
 the hard way and caused you pain
 Unless you count pleasure, I had nothing to gain
 The fact that I hurt you puzzles me to this day
 That's a known fact that abuse is a game I don't play
 How you feel right now, I can't even imagine
 Only I know you must hate me,
 despite the time I've been havin'
 Let me say sorry once again;
 you don't have to accept
 Everyone knows, though, that you were the best

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Wow, you create/deliver a powerfully honest poem that is so felt by us readers. We're sure some could empathize with you, while others will never forgive. We can only imagine the struggle you are having with your self and with your God. This struggle may continue forever, given what you did was one of the ultimate violations anyone could do to a person. You must learn how to accept the past as you work on bettering your self today and tomorrow, 'cause the future can only be better, yet it is your choice on how you want to live your life upon leaving the system. We're pulling for you. Remember, you may never get that chance to say sorry to this person, and why should you, but you need to learn, with help from others if need be, how to forgive yourself.

When I Woke Up

This morning I woke up and I heard gunshots. I was scared. I did not know what to do but go get my gun, you know, my little twenty-two.

I looked out the door and I saw one at my friends laying on the ground — he was calling for help! So I ran over and put my shirt on his wound and called 911. He was telling me, "I know who did this to me." But he did not get a chance to tell me.

He died on the way to the hospital. I felt bad, because I was his last boy he saw. I was all-bad after that happened. It's time to go on. RIP Young Tre.

-D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Getting your gun, didn't extend his life for even one more second. Everybody in the street packing a gun shares responsibility for the rising murder rate in Oakland, and for the death of your friend, Young Tre, RIP. It must have torn your heart out and made you feel insane, but the solution is to get yourself and all your love out of the game — not contribute to more of the same — the early deaths of Oakland's best.

Just Thoughts In Poetic Clouds Of Mischief

Taking me, so closely, to the edge
Filling me with a substance known as hate
Drugs, they won't save me now; I won't let them
Because screwing up
is not something I'm willing to do
I'm trying to save me
from someone known as myself
But when anxiety and depression are taking over
It's hopelessness beating me to the ground,
leaving me alone
Alone in a world that isn't doing me very well
Obviously
But even Einstein said, "Doing the same thing over and over
again
And expecting different results
Is insanity"
Don't they get it? I can't change unless I want to
They don't understand—there's nothing they can help me
with
Rehab isn't going to work
Juvenile hall hasn't
They're exactly the same thing
Then, again, they just want to save me
And I'm not letting them
Everyone's just holding on to something
That isn't going to work
Because I'm not about to let it
I can't tell you why I don't want to change
Simply, because I don't know how
I've never been able to write out
Thoughts like this
Mainly because I would bullshhh everyone
Into thinking I wanna change
And there was fear of someone reading this
But now, since I'm going to placement

I've decided to be truthful
Honestly, I hate myself
And I'd give the world to change
But I can't
Because I love the drugs
The excitement, the adrenaline!
And it's not even that there's abuse at home
Because that's the farthest from the truth
I don't know why I like being here better
Although I still hate it
Then, again
People say they hate this place
In reality, they like it
Only because they eat, sleep, and have a real conversation
Because they're not messed up on drugs
The thing is
I don't understand why I'm being sent away
Everyone knows I'm going to run
Even I know that
They just don't get it
Here it comes
I see the edge
I feel the pain and hurt
I understand what others go through
Not fully, of course
Simply because I'm not them
But I understand what I go through
Don't exactly know why
But I get it
It's a quarter to four
Wow! Times flies!
I've written a bunch
And now I'm done

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: You sure took advantage of this writing session, and to top it off your honesty in your writing is so felt. Right on! We're so proud of you for addressing your pains. This is a start. Keep the positive attitude too. Address the drugs, the pain you feel so you can truly find the cure. You can do it. You're a gift of a writer, keep teaching us all.

They don't understand—there's nothing they can help me with

Expectations

We Expect
Someone driving on the freeway
In front of us
To keep the same pace
So that we may keep the same pace
Or we expect them to get the hell out of
our way

But they don't do
Even though
They don't
Have a clue

We expect strangers to give us
Three feet of space
And not be in our face
Listen to what we are saying
Although they may not be paying
They may be praying
Because their love one is dead
And they don't even notice
We are alive

But we expect them to do
Even though they don't have a clue

We expect our spouses to do
What we want them to do
Even though they sometimes don't
have a clue

What if they
Were you

We expect our children
Not to make the same mistakes
We've made
Because we've paved
Their way
They should not stumble
Nor fall
Yet we cannot forget
We too
Had too
Learn how to crawl

I hope
I hope
I hope you understand
We are not perfect
And will never be
And we must accept responsibility

For the actions of our plans

We do have a plan, right
There is a purpose
In life

I hope we will
Stop using the word friend
So loose
And learn to unite the noose
That we have placed around
Each other's necks

I hope
We discover the core
Is forgiveness
Forgiveness is key
Oneness in love is the key.

-Young B B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Our expectations every week are that one or more young writers will step up to the plate and smash a homerun over the fence. You have not disappointed us! This is one of the finest poems we've read in a long time, and certainly one of the best pieces you have ever written for us! We definitely notice that you are alive! If forgiveness and oneness in love are the keys, how do you achieve them? Have you forgiven others for the hurts they've caused you? Have you forgiven yourself?

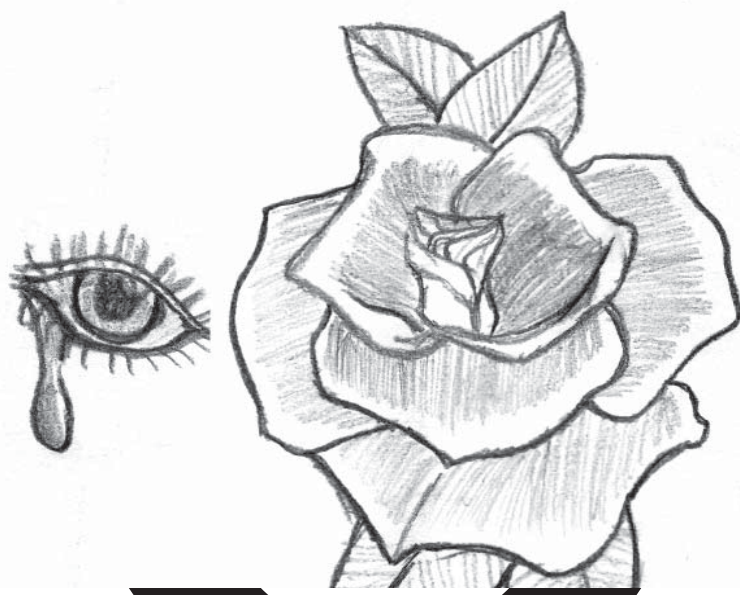
Are You Dying To Live Or Just Living To Die?

While being kept here in this facility, I've really been wondering why I've been wasting my life on drugs, stealing and risking my life and freedom on a bunch of stupid shhh?

I don't know what it was, but something hit me. Whenever I see bums and crack-heads I think what are they doing with their life? Well, when that something hit me I realized that I'm heading in that same direction and people will be thinking the same about me if I don't change. I'm dying to live and I'm also dying to change.

-Jake, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a powerful revelation. It's hard to make a connection between what you're doing today, and where it'll take you in the future. You've done it. You've now got the power to change, because wanting it is all it takes.



Thoughts Of Mine

thoughts of living my life
 thoughts of having a wife
 thoughts of having a child
 thoughts of going wild
 thoughts of living or dying
 thoughts of smiling or crying
 thoughts of truth or lying
 thoughts of moves to make
 thoughts of real or fake
 we make mistakes listening to our thoughts
 we make mistakes from things we're taught
 we might change if we get caught
 we fell in love with fake dreams we bought
 funny how life ain't what it seems to be
 but in my thoughts i can make a life
 of what it seems to me
 even though the whole world might be mad at me
 i have to deal with this reality
 just like you i'm a human being
 just like you domestic violence i'm seeing
 just like everyone around me i suffer from a heart that's
 bleeding

-Viet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your rhymes lay bare the thoughts that carry us everywhere, to lock up or freedom, 'cause to learn from our mistakes, first we have to see them. So thanks for laying it out real, it gives all of us a better chance to heal our bleeding hearts and let the necessary changes start to appear, even while you're still in here — and out there with so many temptations to fear and steer clear. Changing reality begins with a changed mentality.

Las Calles Me Han Enseñado

Yo empee a madurar en las calles. Ellos me enseñaron a que las cosas no son como uno las piensa sino que son distintas. Yo recuerdo cuando empee a cuidarme solo con mis amigos. Nos la pasabamos solo en las calles, pero después empee a madurar y me dije a mí mismo que ganaba con andar en las calles. La calle son para los que no trabajan. Por eso empee a buscar trabajo aunque me deban muy poquito porque yo era muy pequeño.

Me siento feliz porque ya soy un adulto. Ya no me tienen que andar cuidando o que me digan "anda para la casa." Me hace falta que me abracen y que me digan, "mijito lindo" y que me den un beso. No somos de mentira porque tenemos huesos y gente de verdad somos todos.

Todos nosotros vivimos para morir. Yo deseo una vida feliz, sin problemas porque la fama y el dinero te va a traer más problemas de los que ya tienes.

From The Beat: Nos da gusto saber que una persona más se ha quitado de la lista de las calles. Estas madurando y eso es lo que nosotros queremos que pase contigo y con todos que estan ahí. Nos gustaría que todos también se dieran cuenta que las calles no lleban a nada mas que a puro sufrimiento y problemas. Ahora te decimos que siendo mayor de edad no quiere decir que vas a poder hacer las cosas que quieras. El significado de madurar es corregir los errores, pensar en el futuro y hacer las cosas correcta. Gracias por tu consejo y esperamos que no se te olviden tus propias palabras que hoy nos has dicho.

The Streets Have Taught Me

I began to mature in the streets. They taught me that things are not like one thinks they are, but rather they are distinct. I remember when I started to keep myself with just my friends. We would simply spend our time out on the streets, but then I began to mature and I told myself, "What am I gaining from being out on the streets?" The streets are just for those who do not work. That's why I began to search for work, even though they gave me very little work because I was very little myself.

I feel happy because I am now an adult. They no longer have to go around taking care of me or have them tell me, "Go home." I miss my family hugging me and telling me, "My beautiful son" and them giving me a kiss. We're not fake things because we have bones and we are all real people.

We all live to die. I desire a happy life, without problems because the fame and the money are going to bring you more problems than the ones you already have.

-Elvin B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're very pleased to know that one more person has been removed from the list of those out on the streets. You're maturing and that is what we want to happen with you and with everyone that's behind bars. We would like it very much if everyone behind bars also realized that the streets don't lead to anything but pure pain and problems. Now we're telling you that being older does not necessarily mean that you're going to be able to do the things that you want to do. The definition of maturing is correcting one's mistakes, thinking about the future, and doing things right. Thank you for your advice and we hope that you do not forget your own words, which you have shared with us today.

we make mistakes listening to
 our thoughts
 we make mistakes from
 things we're taught
 we might change if we get
 caught
 we fell in love with fake
 dreams we bought

The Question Of My Heart

This poem is dedicated to my momma.

So many memories when I was young
Not knowing what the hard times were
Because you covered them up by telling me everything will
be all right.

I respect that every time dad put you down
You always put up a fight.

I remember being young and not knowing what our
situation was

When we had nowhere to stay.

You kept me from figuring it out by putting a smile on me
and my sister's face.

Just memories of spending short times place to place
I remember when my dad left us how angry you were
With the puddle of tears you and I cried on the hallway
floor.

I didn't know why - I was just crying because you were.
You always tell me he thought you would hit rock bottom
after he left us

But no matter what you didn't let that stop us
From getting to school and feeding us and keeping clothes
on our back.

You still worked different quick jobs and never went to
drugs or prostitution.

You kept your head up and never looked back.

I remember you arguing on the phone with him

Telling him to take care of his kids

Because you were working your ass off but it still wasn't
enough.

He wasn't buying into what you were saying

So you said forget him

And told me never to be like him.

I didn't know what you were talking about then.

Now it's all clear to me - I see what you meant

And I respect how no one ever helped you pay the rent.
You so little but so strong in handling what needs to be
done.

Then that day came when you got the good job,
After studying and going to school and taking care of two
kids and a baby.

I don't know what kept you going, it had to be us,
But it all paid off

And all your teachings will stick with me.

You taught me

Stay in school no matter what .

Don't call females bitches or hoes.

Respect my elders.

Look out for my sisters.

And the main one don't be like my dad.

I took it all in and

You are my hero and inspiration.

I'm sorry for being here.

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Toot aka Ford this is beautiful - your description of your mother's struggles and strength brings tears to our eyes. We know that you feel very blessed to have such an amazing woman to guide you through life and act as a role model. There is kind of a cycle that is happening among young parents. Oftentimes kids whose moms and dads aren't around feel angry, hurt and neglected and vow that they will never be like that parent. The problem is they still don't know what it means to be a good parent and thus end up doing the same thing to their own kids. You however were lucky to have a mother who would not give up, who would not let her children pay the price of their father's mistakes. We know it has been hard on you, being in here away from your sisters and mom, but think of this as an opportunity. Not only have you had time to think about who is really important to you, like your family, but now you can also think about how this will be your last trip here. And we don't want to hear, "I'm going to try not to come back," because it's not good enough and you are better than that. Next time we hear from you we want to hear about how Ford is not coming back. Period.

Mother Nature

A ladybug or a bee

A flower or a tree

Nature comes in all shapes and sizes
Also colors and places with lots of surprises

You come to this place sad and depressed

Feeling sorry for yourself

I'll tell you what

You got yourself in this mess

Nonetheless

I'll be there for you

Make you smile

I'll comfort you and be there a while

I'll make you laugh and stick close to you

But never ever

Will I take the blame for you

You did this to yourself

I'm just here to help you out

And if you need to find me

I'll be around

What am I, you might ask?

Well, listen up

The answer won't come fast

It'll come slow and difficult

Like the greatest sex of your life

Because you'd love me no matter what

Is in store for your kind

Come to think of it

You'd love me

Even if I stole your wifey

So calm down, chill out

Now you don't get hyphee!

Because all your life you've been waiting

To see the best of me

But all in all

It'll come at a fee

But that's because I created you

No, I'm not your mother

Not even close to

Well, yeah, I guess I kind of am, right?

Because for thousands, no billions of years

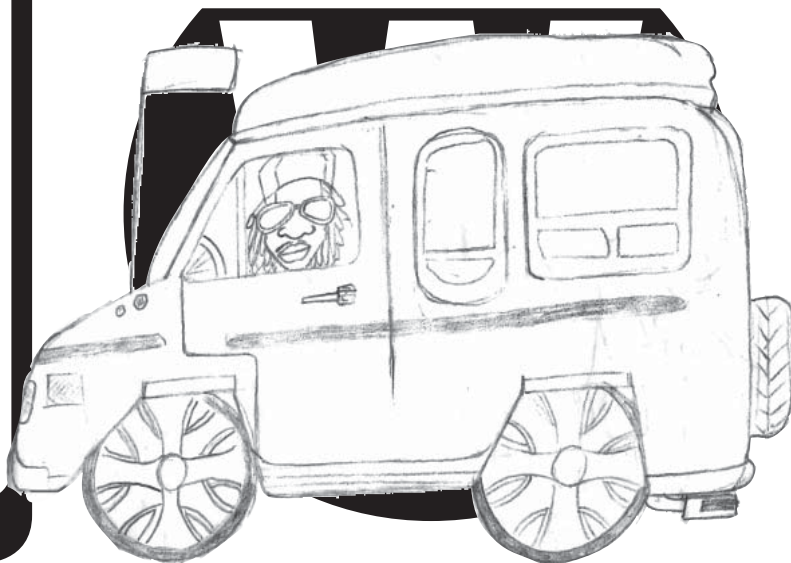
I've been putting up a fight

Well, now that you've gotten a vague picture

To tell you the truth, I'm Mother Nature

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: Awesome piece! As Mother Nature, you have a way of putting salve on lots of pain and can heal almost everything. Are humans close to wrecking the environment so much that you won't be able to make it well again? If so, then what will you do?



MOTHERS DAY

It's almost Mothers Day and I have no mother to send a card to. She is gone and I think about all the hurtful things I did. It makes me hurt so much inside all the times she tried to be a mother and I turned her down all those times. She just wanted a daughter and I turned her down. It's killing me to believe she is gone. I never hear from her. I wonder if she is dead and no one knows. My brother blamed it on me and I almost believe it now. I want her to come home and I am afraid she is not coming for a long, long time. Why did they take her from me? I don't have what I once took for granted.

She was never the mother I once knew of as a little girl. She used to just want me to paint our fingernails together. I told her no and that I thought I was too old for cuddling or holding on to my mom and now she is gone and I will never or probably never get the chance again and now I feel so sorry for her and what happened to her and she is never going to know how sorry I really am and that hurts the most. I am so sorry I can't explain, but I don't know who to blame but "crystal meth." My whole family's worst enemy. I hate myself for the things I did the way I hurt her the way I hit her. The way I told her I hated her. She probably believed me. Now all I have are these memories.

-Angela, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Angela your words are powerful and thank you for sharing your feelings. It sounds like you are hurting and missing your mother. Crystal meth destroys so many families. You cannot blame yourself for your mother leaving. People make distorted decisions when they are on drugs. Perhaps she is seeking the peace and counseling she needs to come back and become the mother you are hoping for. In the meantime you are working on your recovery as well and hopefully your family can mend.

All On Me

I don't think its "all on me" yet. It will be sooner or later, but when the time is right. The reason it isn't all on me yet, is 'cause I got one of the most loving families a guy could ask for. They been here through thick and thin, doing all they can do for me. They been here since the day I was born and will be here 'till the day of my death — whether it be physically or spiritually, they will be here!

But my time will come when I'm on my own, when it's all on me. I'm planning on staying with my folks till I get a steady income, maybe even staying through college because it will be hard to maintain between paying for an apartment or wherever I'm living, and paying for school books and all that stuff. My parents said I can stay with them as long as I'm going to school or working. I appreciate that a lot, 'cause not a lot of people can say that!

But once I get my career going, I'm gonna show them love as much as I can; and meanwhile, I will help with rent and as much as I can while I'm living with them. Then when I get on my own, I will take care of myself and handle my legal business. But I ain't gonna take advantage of my parents and live with them till I'm thirty, ya know? So, till next time, take care Beat readers.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We so appreciate it when we get a Beat writer with his head square on his shoulders, who can see the great gift in life a loving and supportive family really is; someone who doesn't have to keep testing unconditional love by breaking promises and planning to "keep it gangsta" despite his family's best hopes for him. That your family welcomes you to remain a member of the household so long as you remain a productive member of society, either with a job or enrolled in school, is a double blessing — showering you with love and motivating you to do what's right, both at the same time! Now, just do your part.

Life On My Block

Got me where I am today locked up
 Some how I had to eat
 And feed my family
 Life on my block

Is were bodies lay in the dumpster
 For days

Family crying for their kids who got
 Trapped in the game
 Life on my block

Taught me the street game
 Like selling cream

Just to make ends meet
 My block gave me respect

It taught me how to get respect
 The hustlers taught me to hustle

An' the ballers taught me how to ball
 The hustler girls taught me how to work my
 mouthpiece

To get what I want

But juvie taught me how to be me
 An' the class taught me how the real world
 works

So either way it goes, education beats the street
 game any day
 Best believe it

-Nuke GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If everything you wrote in this piece is true, then you've learned one of the most important lessons there is: You education is the true key to leaving the life the block offers you. We're not saying the lessons the block taught aren't valuable, but we are saying that regular trips into the criminal justice system can be almost guaranteed if you don't find another way to live. We're not sure how being in the hall taught you what you needed to learn about education, but however it happened, we applaud the fact that you know. Now, apply that knowledge and move forward.



I Wanna Live!

"Are you dying to live, or do you just live to die?" See me, my perspective of this is: I wanna live and make it out this life with some kids and leave a mark behind that's positive — not negative like the life I'm living now.

I wanna live long and complete my destiny that I was here to complete. 'Cause to keep it solid, I know the road I'm going down is only a set-up for self-destruction and if I don't change my ways, i won't make it in life — and that's just reality. I mean, people don't want to accept that. They want to believe something that they know is a lie, which (again) is the life I'm living now.

It has to be a point where you want to change. Yet, right now I'm still in this little box, and living in this box, it's like I'm not ready for change. But what I feel is, I don't want to die — but everybody has to die one day; that's just life.

-Loe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't let the words trick you, death is the termination of life, as in: game over, the end. To die at the age of ninety, having raised your children with love and seen your grandchildren grow up to have children they raise with love, is not the same as to die at the age of seventeen, with so much of your life un-lived. Yes, everyone has to die, but life is so much more than that bare, minimal fact. Your life is what you do with it — and dying on the grind to make a dime is nothing but wasting your time on earth, living a lie that put you early in the dirt. Don't wait till it's too late. Get out that box, 'cause everything else you say here — rocks! No lie, we're not blowing smoke in your eye. If you're not ready, then fake it till you make it — rock steady.

**I wanna live long
and complete my
destiny that I was
here to complete.**

Life And Death

lovin' life in the game
i stay in the fast lane
on the block create
conditions might make
a rich man not care about anything
or a po' man snatch a icy-white diamond chain
goddang
i really hate livin' this way but man
that's the way it goes
hydro powder drank and bo
pills ice guns and coke
in a generation where guys call women hoes
that ain't the way i go
i'm'a live my life
stay spittin' feelin's with rhymes
and if not the world i could at least change one mind
so no matter how you act or how you live life
when that green line flat everybody gonna die

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got the intelligence and insight, and the talent to rhyme right well the important message you have to tell — but how can you change someone else's mind when you're still too blind to quit a way of life you say you hate and know is not right. Still you portray this generation's propensity to devalue life to the point where wrong feels right until you feel incarceration's bite. How many that you know are already spiritually dead with "that's the way it goes" running through a numb head that could get smart but chooses to go dumb instead. To begin with, make the one you save, the one who spit this rhyme. It's not just life and death, but death or a life of doing time — unless you can quit the game complete in your mind, then stand on your feet and roar like a lion: "Buddamilk's free! Stop livin' for dyin' and see my truth shinin'!"

A Time to Listen, Learn and Think

What's up Beat? This is your boy T-Bone, coming from inside juvenile hall once again. I've been here for a little over a month and I have forty-five long days to go. This specific time in here has been different in many ways. One is the time served/ serving. Two is my physical circumstance. Last, and most importantly, is my mindset.

I have realized after going through all the "what ifs," placing blame and pointing fingers that I'm in here for a reason. Number one reason of course if because of my choices and decisions. Two is too listen, learn and think so I will be able to better myself. This time in here I actually want more knowledge and understanding. I also learned to do things that I found hard to do on the outs, such as take a lot of b-s like allowing people to so call "clown" and ridicule me. Basically I have humbled myself.

The last year on the outs I've taken care of myself - made my own money, paid my bills, etc. So it's been hard for people to tell me things without getting a mouthful.

God has allowed me to get some quality thinking time and allowed me to learn a few things, surprisingly from staff and inmates. God has really showed me about myself in here. The dangerous things I was doing, like smoking and popping while playing in church, as well as the minor things that did not always affect me, but people I Love and care for.

Instead of being mad and impatient like any other time in here, I'm happy and thankful for this experience. This time I've had, to listen, learn and think.

-T-Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes the thing you want least in the world is exactly what you need most, as you can see from your time. You have devoted a lot of your writing to how much you have learned from being in the halls and it always comes across as very sincere, just as this piece does. We realize it's always easier to talk about change than it is actually to change but you seem very devoted to doing something different when you get out. Your energy is infectious and we in no way want to discourage you from being so positive. But we do want to take this opportunity to remind you that there is a long road ahead. It is so easy, as you well know, to get caught up. We know that with your faith and determination you are going to make it, just don't get too ahead of yourself.



These Streets Are Ugly

"Keepin it real" is like a code of the streets. In the year of '06 there are a lot of homicides because most people are keepin it real - they talk too much, tell on people and shine too much. Let's say I have a million dollars and I go off and buy these expensive cars and rims, you know material shhh like showing money, "flashing" in front of a lot of girls by having expensive clothes. One way or another you're going to get noticed and that is what most people want. That's why you have to pick the real ninja's you hang with, the ones that will have yo back if shhh get ugly because there is a 50/50 chance this will happen.

I'm from Oakland; people is grimy out in those streets. They see a scraper on deuces, fours or anything and you going to get noticed. In Oakland everywhere you go or should I say in most places there is a turf and you ride on those rims most likely you will get stripped out yo car.

Also the city of Oakland is filled with haters. Those are the people you have to look out for the most because they will do anything for a little piece of change no matter what it takes, no matter they have to go through they will get it done. That's what's so scandalous - they will take yo' life because people think you is a youngsta's whose coming up. People that already was in it selling drugs and trying to get what they need see think that it's easy, fast money if they just take from the youngsta. The way they put, "All it takes is a price on his head."

To be continued...

-Lonnie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You lay out a pretty intense definition of keepin it real. It's a little scary to think that keepin it real would include taking the life of someone else. We always have a hard time at the ease with which some young people talk about taking and losing lives. We aren't just talking about some "punk," some "mark," or an enemy that deserved it - we are talking about someone else's partna, someone's son and maybe even someone's father. It's interesting that the attention people want from having nice things is also the attention that could get them hurt. It says a lot about how much other people's approval means, right? When we are lost we spend a lot of time worrying about the wrong things. Instead of thinking about the future and direction our lives are headed, we are caught up in the moment. Envy is perhaps one of the most dangerous things out there and when people hurt someone else for what that person has they are taking the easy way out. They are saying to the world, "I don't think I can do this myself so I am going to take it."

I was a young teen when I first got shot at, and the shhh is crazy! Bullets flying past my face like I was in a Matrix movie — but it ain't no movie. It's real life shhh!

Definition Of Real

Keeping it real
What does that mean
Makin' them deals
And ridin' clean
Or holdin' it down
Bein' as hard as you can
And not playin around
Bein' the man
To me it ain't none of that
It's about being yourself
Just watch your own back
And make that legal wealth

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got it all perfectly correct, laid out by your analytic intellect. Now that you own the truth, don't neglect to follow through and do your best. You've already passed the first test — and stand ready to pass all the rest.

My Definition Of Keepin' It Real

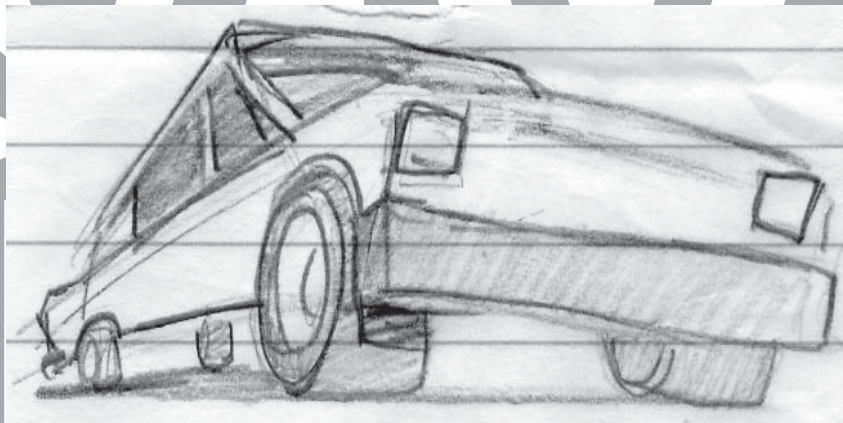
My definition of keeping it real is to constantly tell the truth all the time. Try not to lie as much as you probably usually do, "you know!" Just keep it "solid." When I say solid I don't mean solid as in stay stiff and always quiet and never talk to anyone but only when asked. I mean solid as in being social with other people, being kind to other people and to constantly do right and constantly tell the truth. Because if you're constantly doing right you wouldn't have to lie to anyone, right?

Doesn't it feel good not to lie, but to tell the truth constantly? I mean, when you lie don't you have to suffer some kind of consequence? And when you tell the truth good things always happen. So wouldn't you rather tell the truth and have good things come to you rather than to lie and worry about what the consequence is going to be?

So keep it real, tell the truth and get the real deal, don't lie nor steal 'cause if you do you wouldn't get that perfect meal! And that's on the real!

-Lamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think it's so hard for people to tell the truth? What is it about the truth that scares people? Where did you get your insight, strength and knowledge? Tell us more about how Lamar learned the difference between



My First Gun

I regret having to have to walk around my turf with my nine on me, but that's the rules of the game. I was a young teen when I first got shot at, and the shhh is crazy! Bullets flying past my face like I was in a Matrix movie — but it ain't no movie. It's real life shhh!

And after the shots stopped, I ran to the house and told my cousin, "I just got bust at!"

He said, "You better call Lil' JP (my cousin)." He was from Richmond. So I called him and told him that I had got bust at — and told him I need something.

He said, "I'll be there in twenty min'."

And I said, "Okay."

He came and I went outside. Then he opened his trunk, and he said, "What you want?" It was about fifteen guns in his trunk. I picked up the smallest one, the "Nina". He said, "You didn't get this from me."

And from that point, trouble started coming. I started robbin' people, running in people's houses and running in stores. I was the "Man" with that gun in my hand! But all that stopped when I came to jail for the first time — and I still regret calling my cousin to get that gun! All it did was get me into something that I can't get out of.

-Lil' Webbie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It got you into something that you can't get out of easily — but you can get out of it! It will take more courage than a gangster's got, even though he brags about not giving a what about shooting or getting shot. It will take the courage, commitment and determination of a real-life man, not a boy with a gun in his hand, to change your life. It all starts with a better plan, and then taking a stand to do right. Thanks for this great story, and for your honest conclusion. Admitting the problem is the start of ending your self-destructive confusion.

Baby, Let's Dance

Spread wide open for an intimate touch
Hugs and kisses with outstretched arms
Always a pleasure to meet your acquaintance
Keep on smiling, like a shining star
Takes two to tango, so, baby, let's dance
I'll throw you up high and catch you down low
Give ol' Scorpion a fighting chance
I'm sending this out to all the ladies
Under the spell of juvenile hall
Lots of love and the best of wishes
I hope you all get out and have a ball
Entering from behind my step dad's jealousy
Taking risks and creating joy
The main thing that I'm supposed to do on earth
Always will I love people, whether girl or boy
Maybe I'll find another woman
A girl who loves making love in the sun
Drives along Lucas Valley Road, and smoking
Right now I'm looking for that one
I hope my poem isn't too zany
Giving off weird auras is really easy
Always check for TP before you sit down
Live every day like it's cheesy
I'm hoping that you'll spread your thoughts around
Slip long words into simple conversations
And don't forget to use a condom
So that you won't get nine months of retaliations
Life is like a box of chocolates
Until you try one
There's no answer to what flavor it is

—Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Isn't the flavor of chocolate chocolate, Scorpion? We hope you and everyone find that special love, too. What's in store for your future, when you get out? Are you arranging a place to live, to enroll yourself in school, figure out where you'd like to work, so you'll have a plan to work from when you're free again? Ask for help if you need it!

Are You Playing The Game Or Is The Game Playing You?

I say both because while you're out in the outs sellin' drugs, doin' whatever you doin' yeah you playin' the game for the time being but if the police catch up with you and you end up in jail where you gotta listen to the staff then you getting played by the game. But a ninja like me does what I do on the low so ain't no game playin' me, that's what I thought. I started getting big headed started bein' dumb about it then got my name in the system or as my grandma tells me "in the white man's place" and that's when the game played me.

—DJ, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You really know what's going on out there. You are far ahead of many of your so-called colleagues who still are in denial about who's playing who out there on the streets. Your grandma is right that falling into the system is a game you can't win. Stay out when you get out. But don't think it's easy. You'll need a plan, and you might have to give up some things you enjoy.

Life In Oakland

I live in Oakland. There's shooting everyday. Well not everyday but a lot of the time. When I hear shooting I worry it was a friend who got shot. But I hope not.

Last time there was a shooting my friend got killed and my sister got shot in the face. She went to Highland where her boyfriend went when he got shot and killed. I was somewhere with my friend when I heard Meezy get killed. I was mad.

—Rosevelt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It must be so hard to live in fear of who might get killed next. What can you do to stop the cycle of violence? Ok, that's a hard question. But think about it: what CAN you do? If you feel powerless to change it, tell us about that.

Keepin' It Real

Keepin' it real is being truthful to yourself. Just keep it PI 'cause if you lie your lies will pile up on top of each lie. And pretty soon you will start believing your own lies.

—C-Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The most important person to be honest with is yourself, and it's painful when you see someone lying to themselves! You have obviously seen it, or done it. Thanks for sharing this important take on "keeping it real" with The Beat.

Another Chance

I have not been incarcerated for over a year. I was on a roll. I had everything under control. I had a legit job in doing blinds. I would end the day with around \$120 or more. I was evicted after living good.

My girlfriend and I had it good there, so I decided to move down to Hayward with a friend and partied every single night. Then that changed. Went back to my devilish mom's house with my girl.

I have less than a point to finish high school. I'm almost done with probation—all I need is to wait three more days and pay around \$350 to probation, with my high school diploma.

Now my probation officer's in my history, all been very fair to me. Now they let me be, as long as I don't get caught up. So he lets me move to wherever.

So when I get out, I'll be with my girlfriend and, hopefully, I'm in a better living condition.

I think the one that helped me a lot was Saint Mal Verde. I leave with that. Adios.

—Ivan The Great, Marin

From The Beat: So what happened, Ivan the Great, that sabotaged your good scene? Has being incarcerated caused you to lose your job doing blinds? If so, that's really too bad. How do you intend to earn the \$350 you own juvy? Why do you call your mom "devilish"? How are your mom and girlfriend managing without you, while you're in juvy? Who is St. Mal Verde—Saint Bad Green? Does this have to do with bad money? Congratulations on earning your high school diploma! You go!

Keepin' It Real

My definition of "keepin' it real" is just telling the truth. Be honest about shhh. There's no reason why anybody feel the need to lie about something to seem like a person you ain't. You can be speaking your mind and keeping it real.

I keep it real at all times. I don't feel that I need to lie about anything because if I do lie, I'm gone get caught up in my lie sooner or later. So there's no need to lie or fake something like someone you ain't. Keep it trill.

—Princess GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Telling the truth all the time is a rare thing. When you say you keep it real at all times, does that include the times you're talking to the police, your PO or the judge? Do you ever find that there can be negative consequences when you tell the truth? Are there any circumstances when honesty is not the best policy?

Talking The Real

Keepin' it real to me is just when you just talking the real. Like if I was to say the hall is a hella boring place to go, that would be real. It's easy to say you're a real person but nine times out of ten the people that say they are, aren't. It's like you can say you're keeping it real but words aren't nothing, you have to prove it. Real talk.

—Anon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Interesting! So just by saying "I'm keeping it real" someone is oversimplifying their life and NOT being real? You're onto something, writer. You obviously have the power to think on your own, so we hope you use it to build a new path for yourself, one that doesn't end in jail.

Betrayed In Love

What's up, Beat and Beat readers? It's ya boy, Reesie Buttercup. The dilemma I want to talk about is women and how fake and triflin' they are in my life — well, at least this one woman.

See, when I was outside of these walls, my lady and I would lay in bed with each other, and she would turn over and whisper in my ear, "Baby, me and you forever! I love you!" And I would sleep peacefully after hearing that. Yes, we would get into arguments and we would get into fights, but we still loved each other. And when went to do out dirt, she said, "I'll be down for you, no matter what happens."

So then that time came, and the law came down on me — and she was the first one I called when I got locked up. Yah, she was crying a bit, askin' when I was coming home. Then as time went by and the days flew past, her letters kept comin' in — but getting shorter and shorter as each one came. Then the "phone games" started kickin' in, and then she moves out of the house and into my 'hood — kickin' it with my peeps, thinking I ain't gon' know.

Then she said to me, "I'm going back to school." Then two days later, she got a job with some sucker-fish trick. Some people be telling me, "You think she's waiting for you?" I thought about it, and with as much sex as we were having, I know she ain't going to wait for me! Now she got a cell phone, and she didn't even give me her number — her grandma had to give to me!

I didn't even call her for a month. Then, just to see if she was going to respond to me, I gave her a ring-a-ding-ding on her Metro on Easter Sunday. She said, "Hello?"

I said, "What it do?"

She said, "Who's this?"

I said, "Reese." She got so quiet — as if she had heard a ghost from the other end of the line!

So we talked for a bit, and the conversation started to go bad. She started to bring stuff up from the past. So I ended like this, "Girl, you're faker than a Hollywood scene and as real as Pamela Anderson's topside!" So she knew something was wrong

The next day I got some words on paper from her: "Baby, no! Baby, please! Baby, I'm sorry!" I have yet to get back to her on paper, but when I do — she will know what's up! I am out, Beat.

-Reese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel your pain, how hurt and betrayed you are feeling. Clearly she was doing something behind your back, and that's why you never got her cell phone number from her. You let time pass and then confronted her. She knows you know something is wrong, and she is begging for another chance. Are you sure you don't want to give it to her? Sometimes, sadly, people don't seem to realize what they're doing, in the sense of what they risk losing, until they get caught — you feel? You hope for another chance to go out there and do right, stay clean, and so forth. And when she brought up the past, maybe she meant to be saying that she realized she'd made a mistake but that you'd made mistakes in the past as well and she'd forgiven you. In the Gospel, Jesus says, "You are forgiven. Go forth and sin no more." We know you want this chance in your life, but do you have the strength to offer it to another? Of course, there are no guarantees she won't do exactly what you fear — but don't let that jailhouse paranoia (reinforced by all these j-cats bumping their gums) take away your choice. We're not telling you to forgive, much less forget, but just to think it all over before you do or say anything you regret in the future.

Do What You Want To Do, Not What You See Others Do

Have you heard of "monkey see, monkey do"? If you see someone kill somebody, are you going to do it? If you see someone sellin' coke, weed, or hop, are you going to do it? If you see somebody rob somebody, are you going to do it? So just do what you want to do and not what you see others do.

-Lil' Webbie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're not saying it's easy to go against the crowd, or your friends, or whomever; but doing the things you list will lead only to jails, hospitals and death. Sometimes it's the lessons we learned in kindergarten we need to abide by.

Alratos

Q-vo? Saludo! What it do Beat? What the real deal be? Well, you know who this solid vato be, Lil' Chris from San Leandro. I'm just dropping a quick line out there to let you all know the real.

First off, I would like to send my love to my big bro' that's doing hard time behind bars, too. Well, I'm just updating you all on my new business: It is my time to raise up out the hall life. I'm on my way to CYA two days from now. I'm only going to be in the "Y" for four months though until I turn eighteen years old — then the prison bus is going to come swoop on me!

I can't wait to get up out of here! Real talk! Well, Beat, that's all for today. So keep y'all heads up and stay strong. And don't forget to look for me in The Beat Without in the weeks to come. Alratos.

-Lil' Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All these years of facing your face as you grew up and moved from unit to unit, until you landed in max! Man, you came down to our office and worked at The Beat, before you sank deeper into the life we've steady begged you to outgrow. Instead, you'll be turning eighteen, the legal age of manhood, in CYA — and then to prison! We never did get you to listen. You felt the love but never could change your thinking. We wish you were at our offices now representing freedom instead of a set of ideas that's populating the prisons and depopulating the varrios. What else can we say? We do look forward to hearing from you and sharing your stories in The Beat Without.

Living To Die

Me, all I do is smoke weed, pop pills! I know the pills mess with your brain, but I still do it. I post on the turf twenty-four/seven, makin' my dough — but at the same time, gotta watch out for these hating ninjas.

I be messin around wit' hella females, doing my grown-man thang, 'cause I know am living to die. But this ain't what I choose to do — this what I'm born in! So I'm gon' live it to the fullest! Feel me? It's go hard or go home, where I'm from!

Man, I been locked up since February, and I ain't seen my BM (baby'mama) in hella long! But the way I'm living got me in this situation, and no matter what I do, I'm still gon' be living to die.

-Lil' Guesada, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We won't argue with you about your being born into this life, this way of living that has you locked away from your baby and its mother every day you're here, and facing death every day you're out. But living life to the fullest would require you to change your life so that you can watch your baby grow up and have babies bouncing on Grandpa's knee — then you can say you lived your life fully. A baby can't help itself, and a child has few choices — but the real full-grown man thang is not making babies, it's making a life for yourself that is not so crazy!

RIP Paco

I miss you. Why did ninjas have to do you like that? You hadn't ever done anything wrong to anybody!

I remember the last time we kicked it. We had hella fun just riding around kicking it, going to malls, smoking weed, just doing us, like we always did — but I wish you was still here, to do the stuff we used to do!

The only thing I have now, are the good memories that will forever last. I miss you, my cousin, and I always will. I'll see you some day soon. Always, your cousin,

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It always hurt to lose someone we love, to lose a loving family member — but when they die young, it seems to hurt even more, because it makes less sense. And when the innocent die young, by a gun! Change your life! Do right! In memoriam to Paco, RIP.

Slavery Without Chains

What does it mean to be trapped? Well, I'm going to tell y'all 'bout my feelings towards it. Being trapped to me is not even being incarcerated. To me it means how these white people (not all) are making the future for us black people as a youth. They already get everything planned for us. That's why they building that new damn jail right on the other side of the walls.

If they really was trying to make an effort of making us learn, how come they ain't start building school instead of jails, and how come they set them schools down over there in Hunters Point? 'Cause they don't give a damn about us.

These are my words of wisdom. If you can do something to help you get away from all this mayhem do, 'cause being in the halls ain't doing nothing but pushin' us back further then we already is.

-Sean Doe B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We have to agree with you that if the system put as much energy and resources into education as it does into punishment, we'd all be a lot better off. But at the same time, haven't you contributed to your own predicament? They may be building more prisons than schools, but did you go to school every day when you could? Did you take advantage of the positive things that exist? They can build all the schools they want, but if you don't go, then what good are they? You can't change the system. You can only change yourself. Are you up to that?

Where I Am Comin' From

Now as I flood through the buildin' to make my way out this mission.

I see the light to my surprise, the price to fight my ambition.

Now if I write would you listen?

So I could tell you my reasons -

My heart is leakin'

Through my word

And through my pen - it's still bleedin'.

I ain't leavin' even if I have to sleep in the cold.

Imagine no shoes on your feet in the snow

And poppa told me that I was gonna have to reap what I sewed.

As the pieces unfold, children chasin' their wishes,

Tryin' to overcome this hatred.

It ain't makin' a difference.

And they keep on talkin' about leavin' the game in the Beat.

People up here writing how they gonna change in a week,

Get their next release, then they reframe to the streets.

It's like a stain in the sheets

Take it to the Brain with the heat

And don't forget to say my name when you speak.

-Buddy Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Here's the thing - at The Beat we are not as naive as we sometimes appear. Do we realize that change is something that is gradual, takes time, patience, devotion, sacrifice and hard work (and maybe even a few slip ups)? YES! Is everybody ready for that change? Hell no but we are still going to encourage them to make it. We know that it is a personal choice but what is the alternative? Do you think we are really going to say, "Yes we know that it's hard out there so just do what you have to do till you are ready to do something different. Good luck and don't get arrested. Oh and don't get shot. And don't hurt anyone else." We say what we say because we want the best for everybody. Now we don't know always know what is best for you but we do know that whatever brought you to jail isn't it. On a lighter note, we enjoyed your poem - you use some very strong similes and really know how to get your reader's attention.

It Is All On Me Right Now

I chose the question when do you know it's all on you because right now I know it is "all on me." I know that I am the only one that put me here and once I get out, I am the only person that can keep me out of here. I am already making steps to make sure that I do not come back here; I have at least on job lined up and my mom is picking up applications for other jobs. Basically I need to get my life together

-Ready and Willing, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It has hard to go from childhood to adulthood, especially when you have the system on your back. But you are ahead of the game - you take full responsibility for your actions, past, present and future, and know that in order to stay out of this place you are going to need a plan. We like that you are looking ahead, and we say be grateful to the mother that is on the outs trying to help you.

The Reason Why

I smoke trees to ease the pain that I feel when I'm livin'.

The street life it gets real like hearin' screams in a prison.

But it's the life I was givin'; it's got me dreamin' and wishin'

That we can overcome this hatred that we feed to our children.

So as I reach for the ceiling to get as high as the roof.

I get spooked to get my boots and try to walk through the truth 'Cause people trip wi't they troops and try to shoot up yo' coup

And I refuse to be the one to eat my food like its soup.

So now I sport a box of Newport shorts filled up wit' blunts.

I pace myself to ease the pain I feel each day of the month.

It's comin' strong, it's hittin' hard, its tryin' to back in my spirit.

It's rippin' and tearin' up my soul I'm screaming pain can you hear it

And all we do is fear instead of facing the dark

We'll throw the heat but then we'll try to figure out how it starts.

This shhh is piercin' my heart somebody spark up the grapes.

I'm facin' pain that's comin' realer than a gun in my face.

So since the day I hit the streets I strive to being the best.

I practice what I preach so I ain't got the S on my chest.

I smoke trees to put a band aide on the pain of the past.

-Evans, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautifully written piece but speaks of a pain and darkness that give the readers chills. You know you have done a good job writing when others literally feel as though your pain is their pain. You talk a lot about the escaping through drugs, which is something we hear a lot in the Beat. Bottom line - you can run but you can't hide. It would be nice if we can find ways in which to ignore our pain but the only way to deal with our problems is to deal with our problems. Also, you are dead on when you say that hatred is fed to kids. Like many other things, hatred is something that young people learn from the people around them. Same with other bad habits or coping mechanisms - much of how we behave is wrapped in what we saw as young people.

Doing What I Had To Do

I wanna live but in the end we all live to die. I know I do wrong but my intentions are always for good. When you live in the streets all your life, you have to do what you got to do to survive. And most of the time its you going down or somebody else. I ain't gonna be me, I'll tell you that. If you live where I live than there's no choice but to do it big. I'm from Hayward where ninjas get cracked all day long.

I wanna send much love to all doing time.

-Slick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good intentions can only take you so far. Look where good intentions got you? The streets are a rough place to grow up but you aren't the first when to have it rough and you certainly aren't the last. There are people who came up just like you, maybe even worse, who didn't turn to the game to get through. Too many young people use their circumstances as any excuse not to try, when really it should be a reason to try that much harder. We don't know who told you all that life was going to be easy and we surely don't know why you are sitting here defending taking the easy way out. We expect more from you and you need to start expecting more from yourself.

Going From 17 To An Adult

Now that I'm 17 I realize that I'm going to be 18 pretty soon. In four months I will be 18. I'm starting to think more about the decisions I make and the steps that I take. My parents still care for me a lot so that's a good thing but I know that their not always going to be their for me.

When I get out this place I will be an adult so I'm planning on doing good. I want to go out there and get a job. I want to stop doing the things that I used to do get money or asking my parents for it. I got four nephews that look up to me a lot so I wanna be a good example for them.

I hope all the things that I'm saying become true. Sometimes things don't turn out the way you want them to. I been stressing a lot lately. A lot of bad things have been happening, like my big brother passed away three months ago. He left a four year-old daughter. Another bad thing that happened was me coming here. It's all right though because I should be going to camp in about three weeks. I hope things go good for me. RIP Felix.

-Eduardo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Turning 18 is a big turning point and it's not just the law that considers us adults at this point. You are very lucky, as you acknowledge, having parents who care about you so much but you are right in that soon enough you will be on your own. It sounds like you have been going through a lot lately and we are very sorry to hear your brother. It's important in times like these to not become fearful of the future. When bad things keep happening over and over again, we almost start to believe that nothing good will happen. There are plenty of things that you don't have control over but the direction that your life is headed is one that you do. So we believe that the things you are saying come true - now you have to believe that will and make it happen. You know the kind of man you want to be so the only thing left to do is it.

I Wonder

I wonder, love, are you a long farewell that never ends? From the first, living is separating. In the first encounter with light, with lips the heart perceives the anguish of having to be blind and alone someday. Love is the miraculous delay of its own termination: it is prolonging the magical fact that one and one are two, in the face of the original sentence of life.

With kisses, with pain in the heart, we conquer in eager disputes (among delights that seem like games, days, lands, fabulous spaces) the great disjunction that is waiting, the son of death or death itself. Each perfect kiss sets aside time, casts it behind, extends the brief world where one can still be kissed. Not in arrival nor in discovery does love reach its summit: it is in the resistance to parting where you can feel it, naked, exalted, trembling. And separation is not the moment when arms or voices, bid farewell with material signs: it is from before, from after. If hands are clasped, if we embrace, it is never so we can leave. It is because the soul blindly feels that the possible form of being together is a long, clear farewell. And the most certain thing is goodbye.

-Ti Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: From wherever these words come, they do strike a wistful note that at once grieves the separation of lovers and affirms that love in the very separation as having been always already present in the relationship of lovers. Surely these words will bring some solace to more than a few of our readers who, finding themselves locked away from the outside world and those they love, are in need of finding love to be of tougher stuff than "easy come, easy go" — does the "TL" in your name mean "Tough Love"? If so, your lyrical words redefine it's meaning.

What You Living For?

What's the meaning posting on the block wit' the glock?
Or busting knocks dodgin 5-0, hitting fences, losing bops?

But it's hard growing up as a youngsta,

In the fast lane tossing ninjas in the dumpsta.

Outside all night blowin' trees wit' yo' pants saggin

Can you picture yourself going dumb in the patty wagon?

Doin the wrong things even though life is hard

Just trying your best to get on top of the charts.

So what you have to do in order to survive?

Are you dying to live, or just living to die?

It's hard growing up doing good 'cause no one is perfect.

Life is crazy if you think about it.

But me I'm just here to succeed in life.

I think positive not negative.

-Positive Vibrations, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like the raw energy and honesty in this poem - there is nothing nice or pretty about the portrait you paint and it definitely injects a dose of hard reality into the reader. We know it's not easy out there; hell it's probably a lot harder than most of us realize. The one thing we do know is that life being hard cannot be a reason to not try; circumstance determines where you start, not where you end. And it sounds like you understand that and are working towards having more for yourself. We know based on what you said about being positive because everything begins with your attitude. You know the phrase, "Expect the worst, hope for the best?" Most people think this is just being realistic, a way to protect themselves if something goes wrong, but few people understand the words that come out of our mouth have so much power. So keep thinking positive, good things are on the way.

Fatherhood

When do you know it's all on you? I knew it was all on me when I had a baby. I have responsibilities and I need to grow up and be a man. I have to buy diapers, clothes, milk and stuff. When I have a enough money to spend on me I have to turn around and buy my kid some things but that's ok with me. It shows I can have anything in the world and give it all up just for my child.

-Young Dad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We think it is great that you are providing for your child financially but that's the easy part. The hard part is guiding them emotionally and spiritually. Being a daddy means you are teaching by example, showing him or her what it means to be a good person and how to function in this world along side so many different (and sometimes crazy) people. But the most important part of being a daddy is being there - you need to be present to discipline, love and teach your child. You obviously love your child a great deal and want the best for him/her but it takes a lot more than words to raise a child.

Real Is What You Make It

The definition of keepin' it real is not lyin', not snichin' on the next ninja and doin' what you got to do. It's like this, if you going around telling people that you got all this respect and all this shhhh, they got and they know that they don't got that shhhh.

Like I said if you not doin' what you supposed to be doin', you not keeping it real. Man if you on the run, just got out, out there hustlin', doin what you got to do to eat, ya feel me, there's other things you can do. Its not just sellin weed and the rest of that shhhh - you can do something that's not goin' to get you back in here. You really not keepin' it real if you out there snichin' on the next ninja. Man that's all I gotta say so keep it real out there.

-Stoneface, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So we feel you on this Stoneface. We get that keepin' it real is about staying true to who you are and not being a snitch but what about doin' what you have to do? That should also mean you are going to school, cause that's something folks should be doin'. Or it could mean staying out of trouble, kicking it with different people and not smoking trees, cause that's something a whole lot of people need to do, young and old. The whole reason we bring this up is to expand on a point out you were making at the end of your piece. You are exactly right when you there's other things folks could be doing that wouldn't bring them back to jail. The saying, "Doing what I gotta do" is oftentimes just another way of saying doing what I want to do. Life is about choices - some are easy and some are hard. You are starting to get it so we hope you make the right choices when you get out.

What I'm Going To Do When I Get Out Of Camp

This Relly-bo. Man, these ninjas in Camp be hatin'! 'Cause I eat all day, you know. And I ain't messing up here at Camp, 'cause Mr. Wright keeps me focus. Really I'm tryin' to do it big by ridin' big rims, clean cars, with hella females. But otherwise I'm tryin' to get out in five months, on July fifteenth.

And when I touch down all the way, I'm going to get me a job workin' with my aunt. Then I will get back in school, 'cause I know people gon' be hatin' on me. I'm going to wait before I shine on ninjas, 'cause I got something for this summer. I'm not worried about that. I got a baby on the way! So now I'm trying to get right and bounce back. She say' she' four weeks, so I'm tying to get my head right.

Right know ninjas think they' doin' it, 'cause they' ridin' rims and stuff like that, but I want my lil' baby son or baby girl to be able to go to college and have things when they get older. I'm just tryin' to get my head focused so I know what to do when my baby gets older. I don't want to drop out of my baby's life. And then, plus, I really love my baby'momma. She's really my queen! And I'm her king. We'll probably end up getting married, but I'm only sixteen right now.

I know it's going to be good for us, 'cause I'm going to make it happen for us. She works, too, but I told her that when I get out, she don't have to work 'cause I'm going to take care of her and my baby.

Man, get yo' life together and do the right thing, 'cause that's what I'm doing. Why? 'Cause I want my family to have the best in life! So all those who know what I'm talking about, you should want the same. One love to all.

-Relly-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've witness a big change in you over a short period of time. Major props! It's amazing how much you've grown mentally just since you came to Camp Sweeney. (And props to Mr. Wright, too, for being there for you.) It is a point of dramatic change when a young man, in your case a very young man, is about to become a father for the first time. It is a call to grow up fast. It doesn't mean no more boyish fun, but it does mean you need to learn new, safe, even square ways to have your fun, 'cause that's what you'll be able to share with your new little family, mother and child. Sad to say, these sudden changes most often do not last once you're back out in the free world, but that doesn't mean you can't be the one to show how it's done! Forget about trying to bring in all the cash all by yourself. It will have you doing things you don't need be doing and will end in having you doing time again, away from your child and its mother — and that's not what it is to be a father. Be there in person. Money is important, but love is the glue that will hold your family together through the hard times. They say the first two years of a child's life are the most important — even if the child's mind can't remember it later, that love stays deep in its heart, for life!

They Booked Me Again

Damn...I'm hella pissed. You see, I got out about two weeks ago, and I am back now for curfew violation, on the bracelet.

I'm hella stupid, because the last time I was in here for two months, and when I got out, I told myself I was going to do good and I went back to the same shhh. I didn't do drugs, but I drank alcohol with some girl and some of my homies and I decided not to go home for the whole night.

The next morning I had a fat hangover and I went to school. My PO called the police on me and they booked me again. Now I don't even know how long I'm gonna be here.

-Careina, Marin

From The Beat: We always appreciate an honest piece of writing, yet, why isn't your life, education, freedom worth foregoing all the drugs, alcohol, partying? Enough, already! Even if your home life, school life, etc., isn't perfect, nothing ever is and you know it. Why are you blowing your future? You've already got juvy down, too! It's on you! Wake up lady before it's too late!

We're Living In Poverty

We're living in poverty
Gotta do what we do
To get on with our day
Tears in my eyes
When I see the little ones
Can't go to school
Time to rebel
Recriminate up to the blood you shed
No more lies
Quit being a big sorry parasite
Human rights—that is a must
We're gonna stand and fight
Reparations gotta flow
Return the things you take from us
'Cause if you don't
Things will never ever be the same
We're sick and stress every day
You try to overcome us
Try to beat us
An' shoot us
Or lock us in the pen
What's going on with all that racial stuff?
People can't live together
Just because another
Got a different color
2006
2000 that this one is legendary
I promise you
These words will always rain forever
I gotta speak
Because I'm free inside
Ghetto boys, ghetto girls
Don't hide your pride
Please remember where you're coming from

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: Where have you lived, what has your life been like, that you have been so profoundly touched by the visions of poverty young girls and boys are suffering? Were/are you just as poor as the young ones you describe? If so, how did you deal with it? What resources did you find or create to get yourself fed, get some clothes, shoes, etc? Tell us what this poem was based on? Good writing!

Dying To Live

I be out here in the fast lane, but I am out there dying to live. I say that because one day my big cousin said that dying is not hard and a lot of people would kill theyself to get out of the game and stop the greed. But they value life and keep hoping that one day they life gone be drama free.

Now that I'm in the game, it's not because of it's fun and not because of the cars or the females. It's 'cause when I was like ten years old, the girls and ninjas tried to talk about me all the time over the way I was coming and how it was in my house. So I did what I had to do to make myself not be mad at my life whenever I walked out the house.

Now that I'm eating on the block, everybody be trying to be my friend and be all up under me like they been knowing me they whole life. So what I do is be on my own shhh and don't mess with nobody but my family and ninjas. But not all my ninja's can be trusted.

-Ques B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You said you are dying to live, but it sounds like you are living to die. Placing yourself in the 'game' and trying to prove yourself to people that you don't even know is just going to continue to put yourself at high risk. One of those very serious risks is to end your life sooner than you want to. So if you are dying to live, then get out the game, go back to school and do something better with your life than hanging on the block. You've got the brains (which is a gift that not everyone is given), so use them!

My Life

I live life in the fast lane
 And I gang bang
 Letting people know
 That I'm insane
 Man
 But I'm a different person
 On the other side I sing
 I joke
 And give money to a homeless guy
 I'm really emotional
 I hate death
 I'm the type of ninja
 To wear a bullet proof vest
 'Cause you'll never make it
 With a hole in your chest
 You be clueless
 All you know
 You in the hospital
 Sitting in the bed
 Feeling like ice cycles
 But I got a good side
 I write love poems
 And sit and cupcake all day long
 'Cause some ninjas think about one thing
 But what I dream
 I dream I have a family
 Raise my kids
 Like my father never raised me
 I love my sisters
 Hope that all of ya'll don't let no ninja talk sweet to
 you girl
 Be strong
 'Cause I was raised by my mother
 Stay true to my mother
 So I respect other woman
 I treat them with respect
 And treat them like they should be treated
 I keep it real
 I have a bad side
 And good... for real.

-Lil' Sh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Sh, we all have a good side and bad side. The way that we define our character is by the choices that we make. We all feel anger, frustration, rage, jealousy, love, compassion and empathy, but just because you feel angry doesn't justify your destructive behavior. It's kinda funny, but being mean to someone won't cure the hatred that you have inside. The only way to really have control your emotions is by learning how to control them and not act impulsively. Being nice to people makes us feel good. So, despite how people treat us, we should use every opportunity we get, to be nice to someone. Don't get us wrong - you shouldn't let anyone take advantage of you. If someone is trying to make you upset and you get upset, then you lose. Any thoughts? Forget being angry - Keep singin'!

This Is How It Is

"Keepin' it real" means, tellin' it how it is or how you see things. It also means telling the truth.

Say for instance, your friend comes to hang out with you and others and has a black eye. He tells everyone he got jumped by a bunch of people. Deep down you have a feeling he's lying so when everyone leaves you say to him, "man keep it real, what really happened?". Then he says, "alright, me and my dad got into a fight". That's an example of keepin' it real.

-Lindsey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So if telling the truth is the same as keeping it real, when would be at time that it would be difficult to keep it real?

Taking Care Of Yourself

Eventually you found out that you have to take care of yourself and the best thing you can do is be strong about it because adults are not gonna be there for you all the time to take care of you or be responsible for your action.

Once you become a teenager, you gonna be all on your own. No friends gon' help you in your time of need or homeboy, unless your friend is real. He ain't gon' turn his back on you. If you be real with yourself and to others, then you should accomplish anything you want.

-Sohail, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's true, you can accomplish anything you want. More often than not, we become our own biggest enemies. Even when we know that something is wrong, or going to get us in trouble, we make many of the same mistakes over and over again. Why? Why do we do this to ourselves? Actually the real question is how can we stay focused on what's best for us - and have the courage to stick with it? We should pick friends that are real (honest/trustworthy) with us. We should make decisions that will keep us out of trouble and moving forward. We should understand what we want to accomplish, before we set off in the wrong direction. What do you thing Sohail? Where are you headed?

My Life At Camp

Well, my life at Camp been hard. It's hard staying here, because I know people here that be trying to get me in trouble — and I been not listening to staff. I know I'm trying to get out of here and be with my family though, so I won't never have to come back to jail.

This has been a life I've struggled with — just the people I live around, they mess me up! I don't know why, but I just listen to them. I know my mom misses me, and I miss her, too! I wanna be at home, so I can do right. I don't want to get no dirty pee test, so I won't have to stay up in here weekends. That is my Camp story.

-Al Booboo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need to figure out why you do what those people headed for trouble want you to do. Maybe you're just trying to get in where you fit in, but trouble is where it leads to, again and again. Learn how to stand back. Even better, learn how to walk away when you feel trouble headed your way. Okay?

Reality Check!

You reppin' your gang, keepin' it real in the streets
 But now you locked up,

bein' told when to eat, shhh, and speak
 Tryin' to act hella tough, like you know what's up
 Reality check!

I see you' in here, and maybe with luck
 I won't see the real you, the softest side
 Because I look past all that shhh, past your pride
 I see in your heart; I know who you are
 Yet you still lie to me, acting like you're "hard"
 If you're so hard, then don't lie to me

If you're so hard,
 then why can't you cry in front of me?
 You lie to me, because I don't mean shhh to you
 Telling me you love me, so prove that, too
 And you can't cry in front of me
 Because you think it makes you less of a man
 Come on, now; you're my best friend!
 Just keep it real with me, and be cool with me
 Don't you ever disrespect me

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: Damn, this is as tough love as it gets. Solid piece Heather. As much as you are frustrated with this person, it is still up to this person to take off the mask and be honest to the ones he loves, or stay in denial and be the fool. Hope it gets better. If this person can't get it together, move on!

My Life In Words

Started young smoking trees
 Started banging and slangin' D
 Stabbin's and drive bys
 Now somebody got kissed good-bye.
 Got caught in the system
 So much shhh I ain't gone list 'em
 Pops was never there to guide me
 "W'at you looking at? You want to fight me?"
 My brother on tha pipe
 God please help me find tha light.
 I want to stop but I won't
 Same old shhh, same old song
 They try to make me weak, but my mind is too strong

-Sharky B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You do a good job of explaining how you got into the game, Sharky, but not so good a job of telling us why you're staying in it now that you're no longer a child. You say you want to stop, but you won't. What does that mean? If you want to, why not do it? If you don't want to, why not admit it? In a way, we think you're disrespecting the very God you pray to asking to find the light then dipping into the dark. Is god answering your prayer? Are you answering His prayer to you?

It's Time To Keep Moving Forward

I'm a young man that is trying to keep moving forward. I never had my parents in my life, but I'm not going to let that get me down. I'm going to keep moving forward.

I'm a youth minister and I try to help a lot of young people so they can keep their head up and stay focused. Just because your parents are not in your life and they mess up and did this and did that you don't have to go that way. Like I said, I'm a minister, but I'm still moving forward trying to help people out.

I'm here, on my way to camp trying to talk somebody out of doing something wrong, and then people came to me later thinking I was part of his crime - only because they seen me talking to the young man.

But I'm still going to move forward. And for all y'all that is reading this, you do the same. Don't let nothing get you down. Keep your hand on God's and stay prayed up. God bless.

-Minister Cl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Moving forward is good. Sometimes we get confused about where forward is going to take us. Setting personal goals and looking into our future is always a good place to start. Thanks for the advice.

Still Locked Up

I'm still locked up; went to court today and they said I have to stay for about two more weeks until May 2nd so I'm not mad at them.

The time I've spent in here has had me think about this life - life is crazy and hard. I know what to do when I get out this time; I need to get my GED and find out what would be a good trade for me. I used to want to be a basketball player but it's not for everyone you know.

I'll be starting job core when I get out and I don't think it will be easy for me but I will sure try to make it work. I always say I'll do things for money so they pay why not. That's it.

-Cartier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you are frustrated and anxious, ready to move on from this place. But don't be mad at the system be mad at yourself because it is your actions that pulled you into the system. We are so pleased to hear though that you have used this time to your advantage to come up with goals and a plan to make them happen. So many times people get caught up in the anger and disappointment about being locked up they forget about the positive side - the side that gives you an opportunity to think about what your life means and what you want to do with it. You should be proud of yourself for taking responsibility for your future. Keep your head up.

Today's Events

I woke up this morning not feeling too well. I don't really know why. I guess I just feel like that everyday now. But, anyways, we washed up, ate, and afterwards had rec'.

Once my day was about to end, my probation officer came and spoke to me about a placement. They are going to give me one last chance! So it's time for me to own up and be there for my family — and the only way I'm going to do that, is to do my time and get the hell out and move on with my life! It's time for me to do me! And move on with my life, and stop wasting time! I'm out, peace.

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you say you're going to start doing you, come all the way through. You doesn't mean getting high and selling weed or whatever on the side. Halfway measures halfway insure failure. For your family's sake, be the best you that you can do. You feel? Stay free and keep it real ... good! Understood?

The Person In My Dream

One night I fell asleep and I had a dream,
 About this person who was extremely mean
 He did drugs, carried guns, and didn't care about
 nobody
 He needed help from someone, anyone, anybody
 He was so confused he didn't know what to do
 He hung out with is patnas and his gang affiliated
 crew
 But then he finally realized what he was doing was
 wrong
 He turned his life around into a beautiful love song
 Now he's on the outs and he's doing real good
 He's doing excellent, wonderful just like he should
 My dream is real and very true
 The person I've been talking about in my dream is
 you!

-Boi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great rhymes! Many Beat readers will be inspired by your optimistic poem. What about you, though? Could the person in the dream be you Boi, that is if you leave your crew before it's too late?

Living Your Dream

When you're put in a situation that makes you feel like you're trapped — or when you finally realize it's time for a change, time to be more responsible, especially when you get to the age where you can go to prison for doing something illegal — you have to think smarter to stay out of the system, and that means to stay out by doin' what's right, livin' the right way.

My definition of keeping it real, is living your dreams and being what you want to be, instead of just livin' day by day just to get by. I've never felt that way myself though, like I was only surviving. No, I always wanted to get the best things and I always have gotten the best things — when I did all my dirt, it wasn't gon' last me for a day or two but was going last for a long while.

I'm dying to live! I love being able to go outside with no one but myself telling me what to do, other than my parents of course, or my big brother. But I always love doin things on my own without any complaints.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Either you start out just trying to say what you want us to hear, about doing what's right, and then start writing about what you really think; or you get yourself confused about what it is to live one's dream. It sounds like your dream was more like a delusion, that you could get it all, have it all and keep it all through a life of crime. Oh no, that may start out as a wonderful dream, but it always ends up as a terrible nightmare. Find a dream that's legal — then set goals that will help you get there, like: get a HS degree and a regular j-o-b for regular pay that will keep you safe, healthy and free to pursue your dream legitimately till your dream becomes reality. Dream of a family full of love and a nice home, it's worth way more than expensive toys and fancy clothes. Ya know?

I'm Back

Don't regret what you did, just don't do it again
 Don't say you're sorry, just be a better friend
 Don't tell me a lie, even if it's the truth some way
 What's up with this shhh, am I really back here?
 Am I really reading Scorpion's poems that bring me
 to tears?
 Am I really looking at the same white walls that are
 sprouting faces?
 Speaking to me of such unimaginable florescent
 places
 As I look up, bright lights blind me
 Little people inside my head find me
 Telling me things I wish weren't true
 Making me scream at the silent few

Holy shhh, I think I've lost my talent to write
 Maybe that crystal and coke isn't good for my mind
 Actually, it might be that there is so much going on
 around me
 And it's making it hard to concentrate of the finer
 things
 What finer things?
 I'm in juvenile hall, for Pete's sake!
 Whoever Pete may be; he's not helping my mind's
 state
 It's depressing when you have to pass off as being
 okay
 Just so they don't think you're crazy
 So I fake a smile and a laugh every day
 Been here four days
 I think I might be gong insane
 Again, I'm not crazy
 Just full of neurotic pain

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: Lady, you can write, and in this issue you drop the bomb on us! We understand the need to fake a smile here or there given you are always in groups with other peers, and how you are oh so watched by the professionals in the system. We hope you find that person who you can be brutally honest with as you are in this issue with The Beat Within. Yet, if you can't find that person to spill your truths, you have your writing. We thank you for sharing your thoughts on you. WE always hate to see our old friends return, but if it means saving your life, we are all for it, and it sounds to us like the drugs are truly messing you up. Time to get clean. Time to start a new chapter. Time to love yourself!

I'm Dying To Live, But We Living To Die

We dying to life
 But most of us live to die
 I don't know where we'll go
 But I be wondering why
 I do thing I don't wanna do
 Just to pass by
 I get myself in situation
 That flashes before my eyes
 We make life
 An' take life
 That's for you to decide
 But open yo' eyes
 To see if you fall or to see if you rise

-Jay B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Nice poem Jay. So are you falling or are you rising? You said you do things that you don't want to do, so why are you doing it? If you can't answer that question yourself, no one can answer it for you. You hold the answers to some of your own questions, and sometimes to get those answers, you need to think about the reason behind everything.

Bein' On My Own Is A Struggle

I always wanted to be on my own since I was young, but I messed up and I all of the sudden caught a case for robbery. Now I wish I didn't decide to kick it with my ninjas errday 'cause that shhh caught up with me.

But time done passed by and I got tired of the same ol' shhh and I'm willin' to get my shhh together and do my time at YTEC to get my ass off probation.

Just recently I realized bein' on your own is a struggle. It's also exciting and scary too. It's exciting 'cause I lead my life and it's scary 'cause obstacles be getting in my way. And them obstacles be tryin' ta mess stuff up for me.

-Lil' Ma GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, it's encouraging to read that you're ready to get your act together and do a program at YTEC. But it's less encouraging to read about the excitement you love in your life and the obstacles that get in your way. Since you weren't specific, we worry that some of those "obstacles" might be the very laws that you broke to bring you here. If you think of those as obstacles in your way, then we're afraid you won't be off probation very long. If you have something else in mind, please write about it so we can understand.

Dying To Live

I used to have the mentality of live to die, because I thought it was an honor to die for what you believe in, but after that, I started coming into the halls. It was non-stop in and out of the halls. I started realizing that it's not worth to live to die.

Now my mentality is dying to live, because I actually want to do something with my life and that something is not spending time in the pen.

-Lil' Joker, Marin

From The Beat: We're so glad you are tired of the in and out game of incarceration. We truly hope you dying to live means a complete change from the old you that brings you to the hall. What's the plan? Fill us in!

Prefería Un Día Sin Problemas

Yo prefería una vida sin problemas porque así vives mejor sin pensar que a la vuelta de la esquina pueda venir un enemigo y quitarte la vida.

Por otra parte yo no sacrificaría la vida de otra persona o mi propia vida por fama o dinero porque vale más la vida que todo el dinero del mundo.

Yo pienso que Dios nos dio la vida y solo El la puede quitar. Yo creo que solo El tiene el derecho de quitarla.

From The Beat: ¿Te has dado cuenta que es mejor vivir sin problemas despues de haber estado aqui? También creemos que el dinero no lo es todo. Hay muchas cosas maravillosas esperando por ser disfrutadas por ustedes, pero ustedes no han querido verlas. ¿Qué es todo para ti? ¿Qué cosas te interesan?

I Would Prefer A Day Without Problems

I would prefer a life without problems because you live better that way without having to worry about if you turn the corner, running into an enemy and have your life taken away from you.

On a different note, I would not sacrifice the life of another person or my own life for fame or money because life is worth more than all the money in the world.

I think that God gave us life and only He can take it away. I believe that only He has the right to take it away from someone.

-Efrain B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Have you realized after being in here that it's better to live without problems? We also believe that money is not everything. There are many marvelous things waiting to be enjoyed by y'all, but y'all have not wanted to see them. What is everything for you? What kinds of things interest you?

A Prayer

Thank you God for giving me the strength to get through another day,

Another lesson learned from a mistake.

I am a sinner; please forgive me for all of my sins.

Please let me wake up to see another day again.

I give my life to you for it is only you who gives me salvation.

Bless everyone who has messed up and wants to do right and keep the negative out of sight.

Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,

For you are with me - your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

And heavenly father bless my mother, sisters, dad and the rest of my family.

Be there to guide them and make positive decisions and help them

With any problems they have.

Amen.

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see you have gotten spiritual on us. We too believe faith, in whatever form suits you, is a powerful and necessary tool to make it in this world. Sometimes we get so wrapped in everything that's wrong we forget to take a step back and say thank you for all that we have. We are glad that you took this opportunity to take a look at what's right. It will make you stronger and remind you what the struggle is really about.

My Love

I love the friction in the way you walk

The voices in my head when you laugh

The florescent beauty when you talk

And the living nightmare when you smile back

Off and on I'm deeply infatuated with you

Loving the way you do one thing or another

Hoping you know my feelings are true

Yet while I'm looking at you, I'm thinking of one other

I hold on to the way his eyes slowly twinkle

And the way he looks at me

Knowing how, when his hands touch me, they rapidly mingle

Or how his words fly when the wind is blowing

The two people I care for slowly becoming one

Only because he's the same person

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: Why is this guy bifurcated in your mind, Heather? Because he causes you both pleasure and pain? Because he's a guy who both thrills you and drives you crazy? Well, that's the nature of love, and if it becomes too much, talk to him, or move on. Do you think love bring the most and ecstatic thrills and excruciating agony?

Living Right — Not

I'm not dying to live, because I'm living right — not. So all I can do is keep on living the way I am, or I can change my life around.

-Roderick, 150 Crew

Form The Beat: Every day wake up and say, "Just for today, I will do the right thing, no matter what!" The days will add up, and one day you'll look back and see, you've become who you never thought you would live to be — happy and free perpetually!

Caught

I know it's all on me when I do something wrong and I get caught. It's all on me because I didn't have to do it, so I have to face the fact that it's all on me.

-Roderick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's all on you whether you get caught or not — it's all on you to do the right thing. Every time you "get away with it", you tell yourself you can do it again, and it's a set-up for when you do get caught. Do right and your life will be right.

Authentic

My definition of keeping it real is being who you really are, being authentic. I think not caring what other people think is keeping it real. There are only 90% people in this room who are keeping it real. I say this because ninjas be lying and frontin. Being authentic is not trying to impress other people; it's not bragging about your case for being here. Why would someone be happy or excited about their case? Being authentic is talking about what you lived through and not that bs, you feel me? It's too many fakes in this society; people act too much.

I know I'm authentic because I admit my mistakes. I take care my business and my dad taught me not to impress anybody. I'm authentic because I don't care what other people think about me as long I feel what I'm doing is what I want. I'm not here to impress anybody I'm just here to get my thoughts together. I also get all the rest I need because I never rested this much on the outs.

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We definitely we agree with you on most points. Being real is about being who you are and what you have been through, no apologies and no excuses. Oftentimes people come to the halls lost so they find pride in all the wrong things — you are absolutely right because there is no reason at all to be bragging about a case. And our society has become overrun with appearance-conscious people — it is important to look the part than to be the part. But where we start to disagree with you is about how you define being authentic because there are times in every man and every woman's life where you just don't get to do what you want to do. Too many young people nowadays get caught up in acting on their emotions. They feel like being told not to do something means they can't be themselves but this is just life. You cannot do and say whatever you please and if you do choose to live this way you have to understand that there are our consequences. We are glad to hear that you are making the most of your time — continue to do so and you'll find your way.

Devil's Play Time

I don't know how I do it, day after day

But if the world ended, I'd ask to stay

Just so I could watch everything go up in flames

And as my last few words, I'd shout some names

Names of people I love and care for,
just saying goodbye

Telling them I'm sorry this is happening

Or maybe I would sit there quietly and watch
Helplessly wondering if I've been caught

Hopelessly wondering if this is the Lord's trap

Or the Devil's playtime, if this is the catch

The catch to my life, the bullshhhh of my death

Wandering aimlessly in an unknown state

Savoring every last breath

I open my eyes; a nightmare of dreams that fall

Look around at the beauty of these white walls

Maybe, just maybe, I won't see them again today

The Devil's calling me; he wants to play

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: This is one heavy nightmare of a vision of the end of the world? If it's the end, isn't it the end for everyone, including you? Yes we know this is a bad dream and what a bad dream you create for us readers.

Treal = Truth

To me the definition of keeping of "keeping it real" means telling the truth, no matter what! So, if something happens, and you see it, and somebody questions you — you're supposed to tell the truth, no matter what.

-Roderick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate the strength of your definition here. As we write this, someone in SF was murdered yesterday for keeping it real, by this definition, when he (as an innocent bystander) fingered those who wounded him and killed another (their "target") in a spray of bullets. What a price to pay, when "keeping it real" gets labeled as "snitching" by cowardly killers.

What I Live For

I live for the day
 I live for the moment
 I live for fun
 I live for the one
 I call my love (Star Mic)
 I live for my daughter
 So small and precious

—Suggas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Suggas, you've got a lot to live for — get yourself out of the justice system and live. Do what you've got to do. You've got a long life ahead of you.

How Are You Feeling?

What's crackin' Beat? This is J.J. comin' at you from the hall since I can't keep myself from screwin' up! To tell you the truth I feel like shhh because I had court on the 10th and I thought for sure I was gonna get released, but instead they said I might have to go to a group home. So now I have to stay locked up for however long it takes them to make a decision. I'm hella stressing out because all I had to do was stay out of trouble. I can't seem to understand how it's so damn hard.

There's tons of kids I know and see having fun and enjoying life without committing crimes. Instead of smoking blunts, poppin' pills, and sippin' drank to keep yourself occupied, start a game of ball or talk some game to the girlies at the movies or somethin'.

If you want a girl who's not passed around a lot and is a fine female inside and out, you need to stop getting in trouble, doing drugs, and just all around messing up because a girl worth keeping isn't interested in that crap. It isn't always easy to just change and start doing better so take your time and work your way up because the life us kids in these camps, halls, and group homes are living is going to screw our lives up in the long run.

—Jj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wise words from a wise man who is waking up to life's reality. Thanks for sharing your honest opinion of what's going on with you and your roommates in the unit. What's the source of your wisdom? Where do you get the courage to write this message when so many others feel the need to spit game? Who taught you to be a man?

Keep It All The Way Solid

i keep it real in all types of ways
 going to school, tryin' to get paid
 some play they' cards right, get all spades
 keeping it real is living another day
 making change not busting brains
 not busting thangs
 it 'bout tryin' to maintain
 even though i live this life to the fullest
 tryin' not to get filled with bullets
 i keep it real all the way solid
 using my brain to gain knowledge

—Lil' Jonah, 150 Crew

Form The Beat: The square thugs think they can sell drugs and drink drank, finish school while they bang or go solo bolo and do their thang — but you really need to choose or just like those hardcore fools, you will fall to a bullet or to the law. To succeed legitimately, you have to give it your all.

I Feel Sad

How I feel right now is sad, mad, and depressed. My emotions. I miss my son, my girlfriend, my whole family. I just want to go home and play with my son.

I feel sad because I can't see my son smile. He has the cutest smile in the world. I just can't wait to see him smile and laugh.

I feel sad because I couldn't go to the doctors' appointments with my girlfriend. I can't wait until I get out, so I can go to the rest of the doctors' appointments. I can't wait to find out if we are having a girl.

—Ismael, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is sad, with all these loved ones waiting on you, and a baby on the way. On the other hand, your love for your boy and his mother shines through this piece and shows how much goodness you have waiting for you when you get out. What happened this time that got you locked up, and what can you do to make sure it never happens again?

When I Get Out

i'm getting released

so you probably won't no longer see me in the beat
 the next time you hear from me will be in the street
 when i'm doin' good standin' strong on my own two feet
 because i was able to pull a victory out of defeat
 so now i'm never starving 'cause when i'm hungry i eat
 stayed in the kitchen and outlasted the heat
 i did it standin' up, very rarely took a seat
 whenever i have something to say i speak
 and speak strongly because i'm no longer weak
 started from the bottom and now i'm almost to the peak
 holla at you when i get there but till then
 it's nothing but love so i'm out beat peace

—Dopey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It has been a privilege getting to know you, and to see you grow stronger week by week as most of those around you got weaker, in terms of separating themselves from their old ways in the street. The line that makes us most hopeful for you, is the one about being in the kitchen and withstanding the heat, 'cause if you did it in here, you can do it out there. Just keep your mind clear and your heart strong — then you can't go wrong.

**This Is Real**

keep it real
 don't lie about how you feel
 because your life can be
 cut short
 if you're packin' steel
 if you're shooting to kill
 the police will kill at will
 just keep it real
 and be true to how you feel

—Dopey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The mask of a killer knows no fear, and that's why so many want to hide themselves there, behind the mask. But the truth breaks through fast as bullets smash through flesh, and the feelings erupt piercing the heart of a life gone corrupt.

Dying To Live

i'm dying to live
 but there's people that live to
 die
 life is the most valuable thing
 in my eyes
 the last thing i wanna hear
 is my momma's cries
 while i'm laying in a grave
 and she's wonderin' why
 saying good bye
 i love my life dat's why
 i'm dying to live
 and not just living to die
 if you're living to die
 ask yourself why
 look deep in your soul
 and don't believe the lies

—Dopey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a sad, dark truth that some are so destitute on the inside that they don't really care if they live or die. We hope they read your rhymes and take the time to think/feel their way through their heart all over again — 'cause each of us can find good reasons to live the best we can. Who would have imagined Dopey held by the system, and still teaching wisdom!

Why Did I Do This To You?

I hate the fact that I cheated
 I hate the fact that I lied
 What worries me that you took me back with a blink of an eye
 I told you that I loved you and best believe it was true
 But deep down inside I felt used
 I shouldn't have done that to you
 We should have stuck together like glue
 I wish this were not true
 It was my gangbanging ways and my drug-using days
 That I've done this to you
 That's no excuse for what I've done to a good man like you
 I know you forgive me but is it true? Are we starting new for what I've
 done to you?
 I know we've been together for a few plus years and that we've left the
 past behind
 But being locked up makes me sometimes cry for those memories that
 are so left behind
 I ask myself why did I do this to such a great person like you
 How come I couldn't comfort you with the truth like a real woman
 should
 I shouldn't have taken you for granted seeing you were being so honest,
 Loving and pure — what more can a girl want from such a man like you
 Know its true I really love you
 My gang-banging ways and my drug-using days are over today
 Because I want you and only you
 And please believe me I'm going to be faithful and so true
 'Cause I ain't no fool and my love is so honest 'cause I really want to be
 with you

-Bolita

From The Beat: Another first-rate poem about love, loss and many regrets, Bolita. What you're saying here is that even though you loved this man, you loved the gang and the drugs more. And you paid a price for your misplaced priorities. That's why we're so encouraged to read what you write now, because it's clear that a light has gone off in your head, and that light is shining down a path for you to follow that can only pay positive dividends in the end. We don't know how or why you were suddenly able to see, but we're grateful that you are young enough that, while you have regrets, they will recede further and further into the past as you move forward with your life.

Time To Quit

When will it be your time to quit the game
 'cause banging ain't the same since the taste of fame
 and it seems that everyone wants to share their name
 and when shhh hits the fan no one takes the blame
 but you're ready to spark the blunt with your flame
 and if you play the game, get ready to feel the pain
 no matter what you do, the game will be the same
 so don't say shhh when you're insane in the brain
 for being in the game

-Tor

From The Beat: Very tight little poem, Tor. Does this mean that you are not in "the game" or that you are planning to get out? We think you've identified where playing the game leads, so tell us where and how you plan to walk when you get out of here.

Why You Hating?

Why you hatin?
 Is it because I'm beautiful?
 Why you hatin?
 Is it because I look better than you?
 Why you hatin?
 Is it because I'm conceited?
 Why you hatin?
 Is it because I gets what I want?
 Why you hatin?
 Is it because I have such a fine-ass boyfriend,
 or is it because you want him?
 Why you hatin?
 Is it because I'm popular?
 Why you hatin?
 Because everybody loves me?
 Why you hatin?
 I know why — because you wish you was me...
 Oh yeah, guess what?
 You can go ahead and hate on me
 Because I love it when females say my name
 Yadada I mean...

-Lil' Mary-J

From The Beat: Well, you may be beautiful and have a "fine-ass boyfriend" who everybody wants, but to our ears, this piece sounds like you are the one who is hating... If you're all that you say and have all that you say you have, then you shouldn't trip for a second about what anyone else thinks.

I'm Sick

I'm sick of bein' in this nasty place
 I'm sick of lookin' at everyone's pitiful face
 I'm sick of starin' out this window blocked by bars
 I'm sick of thinking "damn...only if I had a car"
 I'm sick of always wearin' the same colored clothes
 I'm sick of wearin' the next girl's pantyhose
 I'm sick of these white rooms with heated floors
 I'm sick of feelin' trapped behind these heavy wooden doors
 I'm sick of doin' the same shhh every day
 I'm sick of being told, "This ain't B.K. have it your way"
 I'm sick of bein' locked in my room alone, no roommate
 I'm sick of bein' considered some dike's jail bait
 I'm sick of takin' no more than a 5-minute shower
 I'm sick of bein' told "Hey, come sign your ticket, you just got an hour!"
 I'm sick of being told "On silent, hands behind your back, shoulder on the wall!"
 I'm sick of jumpin' up right when I hear "Get up, first head call!"
 I'm sick of these fake-ass females, pretendin' they're somethin' they're not
 I'm sick of seein' them carve themselves three or four messy lookin' dots
 I'm sick of these moody-ass power trippin' staff
 I'm sick of getting an hour, even if you laugh
 I'm sick of livin' my life this way
 I'm sick of thinkin' I'll get out someday
 I'm sick of sayin', "They can't keep me here forever..."
 I'm sick of hearin' people say "At least we'll be here together"
 I'm sick of everything and everybody
 But most of all I'm sick of bein' sick 'n tired

-Corrine

From The Beat: This is one of the best, most instructive and information-filled poems we've ever read on the day-to-day humiliations and limitations of having to be here. You use the quotes of others (mostly staff) very effectively. We can hear those grating, annoying voices saying, "On silent, hands behind your back, shoulder on the wall!" This would make us sick and tired of it all very fast. So, how sick of it all are you? Obviously, you'll never change what goes on inside here, whether from the staff or from those locked up with you. So, the only alternative left to you is to change yourself — at least enough so that you won't have to experience such degrading and maddening treatment in the future. In other words, if you find a way to stay out of the hall, then nothing here can make you tired again!

I'm sick of bein' in this nasty place
 I'm sick of lookin' at everyone's pitiful face
 I'm sick of starin'
 out this window blocked by bars
 I'm sick of thinking
 "damn...only if I had a car"

My Time

When will it be my time to quit the game? A question I might not ever answer. The more people ask me the question, the more I try to run away faster. I was pretty much born in the game and never asked questions. Homeboys an' homegirls suggested to me to stop, but I never listened to their suggestions. I was getting money an' women like it was nothing. But in return I had dudes frontin' and hatin' because all the money I was spending and all I was makin'.

I never really thought about stoppin' slangin' and smokin'. But every time I told my homies I thought about quitting, they thought I was jokin'. All of a sudden I saw my homies getting hooked on the thizz and E. But I felt bad and I saw that it was my fault and it was all on me. But if you ask me when will it be my time to quit the game? Just wait and see.

-Francisco

From The Beat: Well, we really have no choice but to wait and see. It's all on you and the kind of life you want for yourself. We can understand why you didn't ask yourself questions about the life you grew up in, because you were a child and accepted what was handed to you. But you aren't a child any more, and the fact that you are now asking yourself questions you never asked before is evidence that you are maturing. We don't know what your answers will be, but we know what we would like them to be... and so do you!

No Hating

Playa hating is never allowed if you from where I'm from. You get labeled as a coward and after if you want some you could get some. But I highly doubt that, 'cause out here it ain't even about that. It's about winning some and losing some and then going stupid retarded dumb. That's how we do out here all day every day, everyone for themselves trying to get pay.

-John

From The Beat: Well, if this is an example of "trying to get paid," then we want to suggest a quick look around you — do you see anyone getting paid? Actually, we do. They are the staff of this institution, the police, the DA, the PO, the judge, etc. They all thank you because your way of trying to get paid puts money in their pockets. Think about it.

It's Time

When I'm out on the streets getting high, I don't think about my family which really sucks 'cause my mom tells me not to do drugs, fight, and steal. If my mom knew about those things, she would be upset and probably kick me out of the house. I don't want to do those things anymore and I made a choice not to do those things anymore. I just love my mom so much that I don't want to hurt her any more.

-Zuno

From The Beat: We are very touched by this piece, and we know your mom will be too when she reads it. (We hope you show it to her, because we know how much it will mean to her.) Of course, as important as your words are, they are not as important as your deeds. So tape this piece to your bedroom mirror so you can remind yourself every day of what you owe your mom, and what you need to do (and what you need to stop doing) to even begin to pay her back.

Lonely Extent

Where my homies now, when I need 'em the most
Seems like I was only they boy when I provided the smoke
Now these phony homies got me feelin' so lonely
Time to mob solo on my block
hesitation's not an issue
Used to be a homie

-Rags To Riches

From The Beat: It seems to us that you've correctly identified one problem, but that you've proposed a solution that's only bound to create new problems. Recognizing that you're Mr. Popular when you have weed to share should tell you all you need to know about those "friends." But making the decision to go back to the block as a solo act only guarantees that you'll be experiencing more solo slave time down the road. Maybe a better approach would be to redefine your life so that it takes you to place that are likely to make your life better and not worse — such as school, for example.

Why They Call You A Ripper

You wanna be a stripper
But you don't wanna be called a ripper
You wanna be heard but your voice is mute
You think nobody cares
So you become a prostitute
But you wonder why they call you a "hoe"
You think your man loves you
So you give him your body
He leaves you for another girl
Now what do you have?
You gave him the only thing that's yours
So now you're having sex with his boys
And even they're playing you like a toy
But you wonder why they call you a slut
Don't be a statistic!

-Young Royal

From The Beat: What we find most interesting about this piece, Young Royal, is that it's written by a male. When you describe the girl who sells her body (or gives it away) because of a shady boyfriend, what kind of experience are you drawing from? We like your advice to girls not to go down that road, but we have to disagree with you about one thing. You wrote that by giving up their bodies, they're giving "the only thing that's yours." Not so. By falling into the trap of feeling unloved and unwanted and seeking validation through sex, girls give up something that's theirs and something more important than their bodies: their own pride and self-respect.

Stuck

Damn Beat! It's this one girl. She's a bad one, but she ain't tryna mess wit' a young thug. I'm tryna convince her that I'm the one but she ain't havin' it. My brother tryna tell her I'm a changed man but it's not looking good for ya boy. Oh well.

-Young Royal

From The Beat: As the group the "Mamas and Papas" sang forty years ago, "Words of love, so soft and tender, won't win a girl's heart any more. If you want her then you must send her someplace where she's never been before." It seems to us that this girl is quality — and it's quality she's looking for in a boyfriend. So stop telling her that you're changed and start showing her. She sounds smart enough to know the real thing when she finds it.

It seems like a social norm, being negative. How often do you see people running around talking about how happy they are about things?

Who Is Young Royal?

What's really good, Beat? This is Jovan also known as Young Royal outta the Bay Area. I'm a 17 year old young man comin' at ya wit' some real knowledge to ya brain yada-I-mean? I got somethin' for all y'all feel me? Sit back and read my stuff! One!

-Young Royal

From The Beat: We take this as a big tease, Jovan. You tell us that you've got something for us all, and to read on. But then you don't write on! So what have you got for us?

Funny, Funny

My eyebrows are so funny
And I look like a bunny
How funny, funny, funny

-Funny Eyebrows

From The Beat: We love the cute little poem, but we can't agree with it. Your eyebrows don't look funny to us at all!

Tell Me What's Up!

I got my eye on this girl
But she keep teasin' me
I told her I'd make her my world
But she ain't havin' it
Damn, ma, why you playin'
I'm tryna be ya one and only man
But ya keep playin' wit' that game
You probably done heard it all
But ma I ain't the same
I ain't like them otha dudes
'Cause they far more crude
I'm tellin' you
That I'll do good things to you
Just open up ya heart
And I'll promise I'll stay true

-Young Royal

From The Beat: Like we said above, this girl sounds like she's heard every line a man can spout — and believe us, lots of men spout what you're spotting ("I'm different... I'll do things for you... I ain't like them other dudes..."). This one is too smart to fall for words. She wants to see how you conduct yourself, whether you're different or not for real, not what you say about yourself — 'cause what you say about yourself doesn't make you sound different at all!

When Will I Quit?

I don't think I'll ever quit the game
'Cause I'm proud about what I claim
I don't show no shame
There's only one way out for me
And that's death!
A straight-up homie
I ain't scared of death
I've stared death in the eyes
I saw my whole life flash in my eyes!
I'm still down

-Stoney

From The Beat: You can't stop? If we could curse in our response, we would. But we can say: Grow up! You may not stop, but it's not because of "can't," it's because of "won't." The difference is between accepting responsibility for your choices or trying to put that responsibility onto others. The one thing we can see from this piece (besides a future of intermittent slavery for you) is a very self-centered and selfish boy who "ain't scared of death" and doesn't seem to care that others might be scared for you. Do you have family? A mother? Brothers? Sisters? Do you owe them anything? Staring death in the face is one thing. Staring them in the face and telling them you don't care how they feel, well, that's a completely different thing.



Sitting in your room Thinking, "Damn, I could've been something"

Time To Quit

What's up, Beat? I just came back from court. I was so lucky. I was recommended for CYA but my PO helped me, along with my parents, teacher and staff. Now I only face 90 days in the hall, then Camp Glenwood. But I was already here for two months, so they took that off the 90 days. I also got 18 days taken off for good behavior. So I got like half a month left in here, then wait for camp.

About me quitting the game, I am going to quit because I have learned from my mistakes. I'm only going to hang out with them but walk away when they are about to do something wrong. Reason I'm going to hang out with them still is because they are still my family. My street family. And I respect them for that. I got much love for them.

I calculated the time for when I get out and I will be out in time to spend Thanksgiving and Christmas with my family. And I can't wait! And as I speak right now my friends are waiting for my return and have a celebration for my return.

-Jonathan
From The Beat: Congratulations on avoiding YA! We read so many negative things about POs, that it's nice to see someone acknowledge his PO's help. We also want to applaud your decision to quit the game because we think more of that will only lead to more of this. At the same time, even though we completely understand why you have love for your street family, we have to worry about you hanging with them because sometimes trouble comes from just being in the wrong place at the wrong time (with the wrong people). We would hate to see you caught up again, especially if you were just walking away. Be very, very careful (and that goes for the celebration that's waiting for you, too).

It's A Wrap

Hillcrest
Rich's back
I done sold some haves
and pulled some jacks
and made some cash
but I get out soon
18 — off probation
so...

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Yes, indeed, Grumpy — "18, off probation so..." So what? Freedom is not the same as paradise. It requires some self-discipline and sacrifice to hold onto it. And since you'll be 18, you have a much greater reason to hold onto your freedom now! We sure hope you explore some new avenues, like college, because we know that you can excel in areas you may know nothing about without being exposed to them. You have tremendous potential, but that cuts both ways... Take a deep breath and try something new.

Can't Explain When I'll Quit?

When will I quit the game?
That I can't explain
But my mind stays the same
Get money and hustle while you can
Tryin' to get a stack is my plan
Getting loot by all means necessary
When people start to get hurt it gets scary
But what can I say
I have to serve. I ain't got no time to play
I'm hungry out in these streets
But still write The Beat
Hopin' for a change
But I won't - my mind's the same

-Steven

From The Beat: Well, if your mind's the same and your plan is to get "loot by any means necessary," then you're not really "hopin' for a change," are you? What you're hoping for is a change in the consequences, and that's child-like thinking. Since you already know where your money hunt leads you, if you go back to it, some people might conclude that you like it here!

Ghosts? Spirits? Angels?

Yes, I do believe in ghosts or spirits I should say, I have felt the presence of a spirit. My dad died when I was eight. I have a picture of me sitting on his lap at the top of our balcony in a frame right next to my bed.

Well, one day I was just in my room, listening to music and I felt like someone was looking at me, so I turned around and glanced at the picture. It was still in the right position and hadn't moved. So I turned back around and continued listening to my music until I heard a thump. The picture was face up on the floor on the other side of the room. So I went and picked it up and put it back. Two minutes later it was right back in the same spot across the room. It couldn't have been the wind 'cause the window was not open. So no, I don't think that people who believe in spirits are thinking superstitiously. They are for real.

-Shannon

From The Beat: If it was the ghost of your father in your room, what do you think he was trying to tell you? Have you had similar experiences? Has anyone else in your family come in contact with the spirit world?

Ghosts

I don't really believe in ghosts or things like that because it just sounds stupid to me. And yeah, I have heard people say they've seen ghosts, but I don't really believe them.

-Gina

From The Beat: What would it take to make you believe? Since you don't believe, if you came face-to-face with ghost, would it scare you?

Feelin' Ashamed

Have you ever been ashamed of what you've done?
Or who you are?

What you've become?

Headed towards a future full of nothing?

Sitting in your room

Thinking, "Damn, I could've been something"

Something greater than another screw up

Something better than what people say

Someone your parents could be proud of

Doing something appreciative every day

But everything happens for a reason

Your choices have already been made

Now all you can really do is wait

And see what the judge has to say

-Rita

From The Beat: Yes, you have to wait for judgment on those choices you've already made, but you have nothing but choices to make from this point forward. So, while it's definitely important what you've already chosen to do, it's far more important which choices you'll make in the future. From the words in this wonderful poem, it sounds like shame over your own actions will prevent you from repeating them in the future. Do you have a plan for yourself for when this ordeal is over and you're once again able to make those decisions that will determine your future?

Life Is A Game

It will never be time to quit the game.

Life is a game.

Once you quit one you enter another.

If it's slangin', bargin', or prostitutin' it's all a game.

Even if it's school, work or anything else.

Life is a game.

It's all a game to get to the top.

To be on top of your game.

-Me, Myself & I

From The Beat: So, are you winning? Is coming to juvenile hall a part of your game to get to the top?

This Life, My Life

Get money, get money

That's the only thing I know

Get money, get money

Was the only way to go

I felt like Clyde

Rollin' with a cut throat

Bonnie's what I called her

Sky's the limit

Did anything to be a baller

Spoiled my girl with nice clothes and nice kicks

It was our time to eat

No more fish and chips

No mo' kickin' it at the house

We had money to spend

"Ma, get ready

We going out shoppin' again!"

Lovin' this life

Several steps ahead of the game

But it all caught up

So I'm the only one to blame

"Don't worry Ma, I'll be out

Just wait till then!"

An' fast, fast money

Is what I'm gonna be getting' again

-Young P

From The Beat: Ah, Young P, how disappointed the end to this wonderful poem made us feel! You write like a mature poet, but you still think like a child! Here you are, locked up, wearing someone else's dirty-ass shorts, having to eat what they put in front of you, having to shower with a bunch of boys, having strangers tell you what to do and how to walk — and still you want to go back to the same money chase that led you here to begin with. That's what we mean by child-like thinking. If you are "the only one to blame" for your current situation, as you write, then you will be doubly to blame for doing the same old thing and expecting a different result. Do we have to remind you how Bonnie and Clyde left this world?



Let It Be

I'm locked up, they won't let me out
 Now I know what love's about
 The days become years
 The thoughts become tears
 People you thought would care
 Were never really there
 I'm scared of myself the most
 The things I've done are not something I boast
 But still I want to survive
 I want to keep my dreams alive
 Part of me wants to go back to my old ways
 I'll love it then hate it for days and days
 It would be nice to be proud
 And say it out loud
 I'm addicted to you and me
 But I think for now that I need to let it be

-Jennifer

From The Beat: There is a great deal in this fine poem, Jennifer. First, we want to endorse your idea that now is not the time to renew old relationships that have not been all that healthy in the past. You are very intelligent and very insightful, gifts which it would be a crime (another one) to ignore while you pursued other things. The fact that you want both to go back to your old ways while at the same time wanting something better for yourself tells us that you need to spend some quality time with yourself. You need to let your head lead you for a while, and not your heart, which is too easily manipulated and subject to self-delusion. Get yourself as strong as you can, not just in body, but also in mind and, maybe most important, spirit or soul. When you integrate the strengths of these parts into a whole person — when you are comfortable with who you are and who you are becoming — then you will be able to have a healthy relationship with this man or another because you will know who you are, and you'll be less tempted to be what others want you to be. You're at a crossroads in your life, Jennifer, and the choices you make in the immediate future will weigh heavily. Take your time.

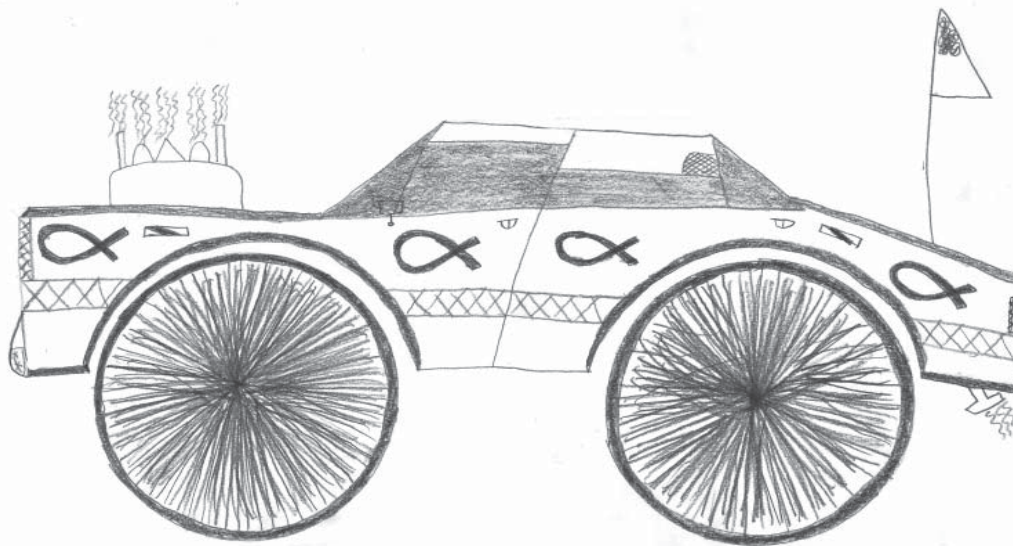
My Little Angel

People would ask me if I believed in angels and I would always say no. That changed when my baby girl was born. Even though I was locked up as usual, I could feel something change inside my heart. For the last two years I have only seen my baby girl five times and I feel like the worst Daddy alive. My baby mama said if I straighten up she'll let me be a part of her life again. So that's what I'm doing.

I'm currently in the process of getting my GED and when I get out, look for a legit job. I also promised her I wouldn't miss any more birthdays since I missed her first and her second one was last month and I was in here. I promised myself to stop selling drugs for the safety of myself and my baby girl. I dream about my baby girl non-stop and I feel like crying every time I see her picture. But I know no matter what she's looking after me and keeping me safe. She is the love of my life, the girl I want to hold. My little angel, Aniyala.

-Tony

From The Beat: The depth of your feelings for your daughter and the changes it has brought in your heart and in your outlook shine through every word in this wonderful piece, Tony. We don't know why it takes the birth of a child to make a young man see how important life is, but if that's what it takes, then so be it. Remember this, Tony. Those deep feelings of love and hope for your daughter's future are the same feelings your own parents have for you. They valued your life more than you valued it. But now, with your own child, you have come to see your own value as a father, as a lover, as a human being. You should be very proud of yourself for making a firm decision to change the course of your life and to make the sacrifices that every GOOD father is forced to make for his children. You are very lucky to have such a strong connection to the future. Don't ever go back to the past!



Behind These Walls

Behind these walls is no joke
 Being in here is making my parents go broke
 When we could spend our money on better things

Like food, clothes and bills
 But I'm still here behind these walls
 Wearing these stanky draw's
 Getting that legit dough
 Graduating from high school
 But instead I was a fool
 Doing crimes that I wasn't supposed to
 I had a girl but I messed it up by coming here
 All I heard was that I wasn't gonna amount to nothing
 That's all I heard
 I felt like flipping them the bird
 But the best thing to do was prove them wrong
 When I did I felt strong
 I got the utmost respect and it felt good
 Now I'm doing the best that I could
 The time is for me to get released
 So see you later and peace

-Carlos

From The Beat: What we like most about this poem, Carlos, is that you recognize that the best revenge against those who predict that you won't amount to anything is to amount to something! You can flip the bird all you want, but as long as you're locked up or doing the things that cause you to lose your freedom, then it's just an empty gesture, a impotent sign of frustration. But if you're out there, doing the things you are supposed to be doing and avoiding the things you are not supposed to be doing, then there's no need to flip anyone off. By living your life in a positive way, your own existence will be like a rebuke to those who didn't believe in you. Hold your head up. Success is the best revenge.

Everything Is Negative

Young people talk about hate. Old people do too. Young, old, everyone. Not just hate, actually. Everything they talk about is totally negative, you know? This whole essay is negative. Like when people are stuck in traffic, they think, "Damn! Look at those people in the other lane going all fast while I have to sit here and be late for work." And when they're in the fast lane, they don't look back at the people in traffic and feel bad for them. Sometimes they don't even care that they're in the fast lane.

It seems like a social norm, being negative. How often do you see people running around talking about how happy they are about things? Sure that might be normal once in a while, but they do it all the time and that makes them lunatics. Compare them to someone who grumbles and complains about shhh most of the time. They sit there in class and say, "I hate this bull!" and that's normal, maybe cool. Really, who the hell would sit there and say, "Wow! This is great!" while they work?

-Chang

From The Beat: We're not sure if you're trying to express a view about human nature in general (it's negative), or whether you're making observations about your own community only. We can't agree that everyone is mostly negative because we've been around a lot of people who always see the bright side of things. At the same time, we do agree that many people seem to take pleasure in the misery of others, which is entirely negative. What do you do to contribute either to a negative or a positive atmosphere?

You

Wifey type
Yeah
That's about right
My wifey type
5'5" with brown eyes
Oakland is where she from
And sexy as they come
Super sexy
Lil' Jazzy
Princess of the town
A real girl that care
Never scared
And gotta have long hair
Don't pop
Smoke sometimes
But love to be with her ninja
All the time
My future wifey type
Yeah, that's about her all right.

-Militant Youngsta

From The Beat: That's it. That's all your looking for in a wife? Better think about some other qualities that you want before you end up with someone that you don't want. By the way, we were expecting a much more solid piece from someone who calls himself the "Militant Youngsta." What's so militant about what you wrote? By the way, save your sweet love poems for the one you like, and use The Beat to teach!

Keepin' It "Treal"

You know, keeping it real, don't always have to do wit' the game. When I say I'm keeping it real, I mean I'm keeping it real wit' my life.

Ninjas that be written in The Beat, make they' life sound like they livin' that cutthroat life — they need to keep it real and just accept the fact that they are either j-cats, marks, noodles, or squares. Don't trip off what the next ninja think! You ask me, forget the next ninja, 'cause he ain't gon' do nothin' fo' you!

That's why a ninja like me, I be to myself. Feel me? If you gon' do something to show off, make sure the person you showin' off for — is you! If you can live yo' life without tryin' to impress anybody, that's keeping it real wit' yourself.

-Bra Dummy

From The Beat: You speak with authority, as if you've really seen your way through all the bull surrounding the game in the street and you've come out standing on your own two feet. This is some sound advice to follow anywhere, but especially at Camp where the mouths never stop flappin' in your face. What you advise here is probably both the most difficult and most important thing to do in this place. Impress yourself, not the mob, by getting a degree and a job.

All On Me

I was a very young teen living on my own, in a car. Buying cheap Steve Madden from other people. Trying to give my homies money and kick it all over Oakland, trying to make money to live.

My mom thought I was in school but I was acting like a fool. Get high, try to wake up everyday in a dusty-ass car, bump that. I seen it was all on me. Just another Oakland ninja tryin' to get some paper. After I got blurped by OPD, best of the best, I went home and didn't stay.

Once I got home I got on house arrest. I came back up here. I was kicking it and I turned off my ankle monitor. I was sleeping in a car, hustling everyday, grinding. Everyone thought I was in school. I got stopped by the police and shhh I was in a program. But I got blurped again.

-Unknown Youngsta

From The Beat: Being a young teen is very young to be on your own. There's no way someone so young could know how to take care of themselves. But, now that you are older, you should learn about what kind of behavior is getting you sent to the Hall. Being on your own at such a young age explains why you are in the situation that you are in, but doesn't excuse it. Stop making stupid mistakes, you know better. Time to grow up — it's all on you.

Picture

I can't picture beauty
I can't picture love
I can't picture the sweet red rose
Nor the heavens above

-Poetic Thoughts

From The Beat: What can you picture? A brighter future? Life outside of the Hall? If you can't picture that, you're destined to fail.

My Poem

My mom's car
Is the one in the town
It go dumb and I like some
And people be looking at it like owwww
It go dumb
I love home
To the town.

-Nario

From The Beat: Nario, What exactly happens when a car goes dumb? Dumb, dumb, dumb!

Get Caught, You a J-Cat

All I got to say is — stay away from the hall and the pen! I know some ninjas say it's part of the game, going in and out, but it's not. Once you get caught, you is a J-cat.

I say this because I got caught for some deep shhhh: I gang bang, from Inglewood (L.A.) to Pomona, and Oakland. I got caught for attempted murder in Pomona and a gun case, but never got caught for drugs. It's always got to be the dumb things that I get caught for!

I was a young teen, locked up in maxr, for that attempted murder — it was just off wearing the wrong color! Shot the fool, and I thought I was going too get away with it! You know they threw my ass in jail, but I fought my case and got out when I was fifteen.

Then I got locked up again. This time it was Alameda County, for tryin' to bang that color again. Finally I got here to the camp (Camp Sweeney) and cant' wait to get out — and I ain't messing wit' it no more. Going in an out, is not supposed to be part of the game. And if it is — then the game playing you! I'm out.

-Little Locked

From The Beat: We changed your signing off at the very end. It is all but inconceivable that you could write all this hard truth, with the very powerful conclusion that if you are going in and out of incarceration as a result of your life style — "the game is playing you!" That is the straight truth. It is playing you. And then you still sign off banging your color? You see do see the big picture, but then you don't allow yourself to see your part in it. Big picture: "The game is playing you." Your part in it: "You are playing yourself." Quit the game!

That Shhhh!

This Kev up here at Camp. You know, holding it down. Got three and a half more months up here before I get released.

This shhhh up here is hella weak, man! But I'm 'bout to be gold badge next week. You know, that means leave on Friday 2:30 PM and come back Monday at 7:30 PM. Then I only got to stay here Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

You ninjas in the Hall, keep y'all heads up, man, and thug that time out. Peace! This ya boy, Kev, holla at me!

-Kev

From The Beat: We respect your getting that gold badge, and we know you'll enjoy that extra time away from Camp. But now, don't let your vocabulary trick you. You didn't get that badge by "thugging it out" but by using your better mind to make better decisions. Don't just "pimp the system" and go back to the same old ways of thinking and acting on the out, or you'll be back on lock up soon enough without a doubt. Use these weekends to practice staying with that better mind and leave jail-time behind.

Leaders Should Keep It Real

The definition of "keeping it real" is being real to yourself. Not trying to be something you're not. Being original. Keeping it real is about being a leader.

-Kevin

From The Beat: What if you're not a leader — then would it be "keepin' it real" to admit it to yourself?

Keepin' It Solid

What's up wit' it, Beat! This Baby Boi comin' straight out of Camp. This go out to all in the hall — ninjas keep yo' head up! Chaze my ninja, keep yo' head up and stop messin' up. Keep it solid! And all my other ninjas in the hall, y'all know who this be. So keep it solid and try and get to the hut. I'll be back in another six months. But until then, I'm gon' keep it solid.

-Baby Boi

From The Beat: If "the hut" means home, yeah, do a good program and get back home. But if "the hut" is where you and your homies meet up to get high and scheme on how to get yourselves into trouble — rethink your goals before your troubles double.

Dying To Live

I think I'm dying to live! I wanna make it in life. I want all my ninjas to see me shine!

But it's always gon' be them hatin-all ninjas out there quick to take another ninja's life 'cause they see 'em makin' it. Ninjas always want what someone else got, always livin' a dream, tryin' to picture themselves livin' like the next ninja.

-Hakeem

From The Beat: The street game is all about living to die, and you just explained part of the how and why of that fact. So if you really are dying to live, then it's time to change how you act — get your HS degree and a legitimate j-o-b, then watch your money stack. And your right choices will have your back!

My Life at Camp Wilmont Sweeney

I've only been here for a week and I hate it! I had always thought I would never wind up here.

In 2003, I ended up at Thunder Road for a twelve-month program and got released in 2004 and was placed on probation for six months — and I passed it. I was out for only 2005 though, one year, before I got caught back up with a robbery I had done just to get some damn weed — and look what it got me! Another monthly program!

I don't have my mom every day nor my girlfriend. My mom was very mad when I got arrested again! And I've been with my girl for three years. She was very good to me always; anything I wanted, I had — she gave it to me. Sometimes I was very mean and disrespectful because I did not realize how good she was to me. We are still with one another though, and I keep asking her why she never left me. She says it's because of all we been through in those three years we been together.

She loves me a lot! I miss her a whole lot! I talk to her sometimes but it's not enough. Like they say, you don't know what you got until it's gone.

-Young Oakland Hope

From The Beat: You should have taken what they were saying to you at Thunder Road more seriously, 'cause look what happened. No doubt you told yourself that drugs (especially alcohol and weed) were not your real problem. "It wasn't the drugs that got me arrested [or shot at or whatever]." But look what happened to you: caught up doing something stupid just to buy some weed! What will it take to wake you up? In MA (Marijuana Anonymous), they say weed is the subtlest of addictions, the hardest one to see and accept as drug addiction. We only have one other question to ask you. Intending no disrespect: Were you scoring weed just for yourself, or was it for you and your girlfriend? Your mom got mad, and rightly so. If your girlfriend uses you to score her drugs, you need to rethink your relationship, however generous to you she may be. If we have this all wrong, sorry, just trying to help. Again, no disrespect intended.

The Camp

I'm up here at Camp, just doing another program — because I decided to make another one of my stupid mistakes! And I know I shouldn't've been stupid, but it goes to show you that even if you're with your own family you can still commit some more crimes.

I can't wait 'till I get up out of here, because I need to be out there with my girl. And I need to just stay out of problems and trouble, 'cause this stuff ain't worth it! Trust me! Take it from someone that has experienced hella shhh in life. Peace. Late.

-Brainiac

From The Beat: It is a sad lesson to have to learn, that sometimes our own family members are the ones who urge us to try something stupid — and we get burned! But even when you get away with it, it's just a set up, 'cause you just keep going without let up till you're caught up again. Live and learn, friend.

Today

Today I went to go to take my GED, and I think that I did well! Today, also, I have only thirty-three more days left before I get out this darn camp. Also my son is doing good.

My lil' cousin, P-Stank, got out and he's at ROP (Rites of Passage) in Nevada, and now he's getting his life back on track.

And today I wish I was on the outs to go take my fine lady out somewhere and do some things, too. Also I passed "knock road" and I been smoke-free for about seven and a half months now. I'm proud of myself! How about you?

-Arian Baby

From The Beat: We do wish you'd drop that "aka" 'cause it will only keep you getting in trouble. That said, major props on taking your GED, being clean for seven and a half months (just keep passing "knock road" on by, or, better yet, take another route); plus congrats on your son doing good and P-Stank getting his life on track (but ROP is only as good as what you make of it). Honest, we're truly proud of you and happy you're doing well!

Keep It Real, Do Your Program

My definition of keeping it real is how you do your program; and how you communicate with other residents; and that you try not to be a follower but be a leader — so keeping it real is being yourself and doing your own thang.

-Julian

From The Beat: In the context of Camp Sweeney, this response makes a whole lot of sense. Keep it real like this, and you'll see real results at the other end of your commitment time.

My Life Is All On Me

When I found out it was all on me, I was happy 'cause I could do what I want to, but sometimes I be hella mad when I gotta buy my own clothes and stuff.

-Ko

From The Beat: When you do what you want, YOU are responsible for your actions, and suffering the consequences of them. Sitting in juvenile hall, do you think that you were given this responsibility too early in life?

Today

Sorry Beat I'm a little tired and irritated today so I don't have anything to write. All I have to say is I always keep it treeeal!

-Ri-Ri

From The Beat: Thanks for keeping it real. (And treeeal)

What's Your Definition Of Keeping It Real?

My definition of keeping it real is, keeping it solid, like don't lie. Say if my ninja shot somebody and everybody was there and we're talking about it in a basement and we be like, "why did you shoot that ninja?" And he be like, "'cause that ninja pulled his thang out first." And I be like, "keep it real, he did not pull no thang out."

-Hunter

From The Beat: So basically you are saying that "keeping it real" is telling the truth. Is there ever an appropriate time to not keep it real?

All I See

i'm living to be a gee
'cause that's all i see
hop in the ride and glide
through town on my [home visit] h v
it's bright daylight as you can see
but ninjas stay postin' tryin' a get they' cheese
i see you starving but play it right
switch to posting at night
'cause i'll watch your back

-Mien G-Money

From The Beat: This is the saddest piece, 'cause you're not even truly free — and you're already back to that same old mentality. You think if you can be just a little slicker, you won't come back to lock up quicker than the last time you were released. Oh please! We'd laugh if it didn't hearts didn't hurt to see what you still see — delusional dreams masking harsh realities. Wake up!

Keepin It Real

Keeping it real, means to me: Keep it real is not having to hide no fear, just living life to the fullest! Keepin' it real is no turf hoppin' from 'hood to 'hood — that be bullshhh! I'm'a keep it real. Forget everybody that don't like me. I see you.

-OB'trice

From The Beat: You're blessed to be out of max, chillin' at Camp. Even if all the mouths of fools will stress you and test you here, it's nothing like going to prison — you got that clear? But if you go back to how you used to think and act, you'll be back in max for a fact. Don't waste your blessing! Learn your lesson.

It's On Me

What's up wit' it! I'm about to be eighteen and I gotta be responsible for my decisions. I ain't tryin' a hit the County Jail, or the Pen'. But if I have to, oh well.

When I get out this Camp program, I'm keeping it coo' 'cause it's hot with the five-oh and there's some scandalous people where I'm from. I'm'a stay chillin' with my baby'momma and with the homies from my 'hood. I'm not gonna be doing stupid things like back then when I was a lil' youngsta.

I'm getting a job when I get out, too. It's on me though — if I want to be responsible. I'm out now. To all, stay solid. Late.

-Lil' Vamp

From The Beat: If by chilling with the homies, you mean getting drunk and high with your crew, and by staying solid, you mean representing your 'hood, then you will still be doing those same old stupid things — and "oh well" will not take the place of being there as your baby's daddy. Get that job and be cool, just as you say, and follow the golden rule so you can be home with your family to stay.

Keepin' It Real Don't Lie

Keeping it real, is when you don't lie and you keep it solid. Keeping it real, is when you have nothing to hide. Keeping it real, is when you keep it with knowledge. Keeping it real, is when you don't do what you know is wrong. Let's keep it real, everybody!

-Young D

Form The Beat: But now, what does "keep it solid" mean in your piece? If we agree with your definition of that, then we agree with everything you write here, for a fact!

To My Dead Peers

I crack a fifth (bottle) of XO Henn, sit back and pour it all out to my dead peers that died over these stressful past years do to (the) violence and hate on these dumb streets ... so I wonder how life would have been if there weren't any rules owned by the silly game on these tough streets.

-Mien G-Money

From The Beat: The game doesn't own the rules, the game owns you just so long as you volunteer to be a soldier in its army of victims. In your other piece you say you'll have their backs, but you know it's not possible when you look at the facts. The game is subject to the rules of reality. To survive, change your mentality so you can quit and go legit. Do time, die or quit — that's it. Choose not to change and you lose (in) the game.

Dying to Live

Well, I'm dying to live, because it's hard to grow up in the 'hood, where drugs are sold, and people get robbed, and kids get shot. But I am dying to live, because I have to watch my back on these streets — your friends ain't gonna be there all the time.

-Julian

From The Beat: You need to rise up off the street and get yourself a regular job to get paid. Yeah, you still might get robbed one day, but posted on the corner you're a high-profile target.

RIP Lil' Rob

What's up wit' it y'all? This Lil' Mal. Rob was my cousin, and I just want to let everybody know somebody took my cousin out this world, away from me and my family.

Right now I'm in Camp Sweeney, on top of this hill, and I didn't get a chance to see my cousin's baby, but I'm going to his funeral on Thursday. RIP Rob. I'm'a miss you, Rob even if you in a better place.

-Lil' Mal

From The Beat: We cut all of your crew calls. Don't you know that's what got him killed? That so-called game you play! And if you seek revenge, you just insure that others you love will die the same way. But if you want to help raise Rob's baby, okay! That's love — but you need to put the gun away, forever and a day. RIP Rob, speak to Mal from heaven, get him out the mob.

I Like You Kee Kee

I like you Kee Kee
I look for love
I seek for you
You want to hang
I'll hang
I bang love only for you
Would you be my girl
I will be your world
Your heart
Do not let an earthquake
Break us apart
Come get me boo.

-Deandre

From The Beat: Hmm... is this all the game you got? Next time send your lil' love letter/poem to the one you love and save space in the pages for The Beat for those to teach.

Everything Counts at Eighteen

Well, I know it is all on me when I hit eighteen, 'cause everything counts. That's why I've decided to think before I do my action — so I know it's all on me when I face my consequences and then move on with my life.

-Julian

From The Beat: Take right action and the consequences will be right, too. Why risk your freedom at all? If you get away with it, you'll do it again, and again, till you get caught. Since it's all on you, just do right and everything will be right.

Keepin' It Real, Livin' Life

My definition of keeping it real: Be out there slanging dope, shoot fools, messin' with girls, kissing on them mouth, livin' life in the street! When shhh stops, they don't remember shhh — because they been so high, in outer space!

-Reese

From The Beat: We cut part of this piece. We know you're mad at your girlfriend, but in your rage, disrespecting all women on the page is bad enough, the idea that you'd want to go out and live life that way is nothing less than tragic ... and since we know you know better, evil even. To do well in the free world, you'll need to handle your anger better than this — or you'll end up in the pen' getting kissed.

Crazy Life

living in a world full of hate
where hella ninjas is fake
so being a gangsta was the only option to take
families crying
homies dying
my ninjas throwin' up that mighty varrio packin' heat
holding court down
and if you mess with them you might be comin up short now
people go around shooting each other for no reason
and it ain't even funk season
ninjas actin' like straight heathens
and they act like nobody sees them
why did that man have to get popped
now he's on the ground dropped
damn when will this war stop
ninjas see the black-and-white and yell out — cops
they got a gun and look back and there's no way to run
they get away — not
— they get caught
listening to them oldies
twistin' up a rollie
'cause i'm a rock-and-roll gangsta
not no wanksta
and "the town i live in is lonely"
man i miss my homie
trying to stay out of trouble
but the streets is full of rubble
and we live in a little bubble
so to all be coo' take it easy
and don't trip off that dumb beezy
and i'll see you on the outs
hopefully you'll see me
and we can drink a forty
hope and faith is all i need
and all i want to do is succeed

-Lil' Krazy

From The Beat: The key to your future success will be getting out of the mess you felt was your only option, 'cause now you've grown in wisdom and you see what it's costin'. To live the life of a gangster only increases the hate, and the love you give your own side increases the waste of life — 'cause you inspire them to continue to fight a war where no one is right and on both sides the strong die young and in their names the curse goes on. Drink your forty at the grave, but the only homie you'll ever really save is the one you convince to get out of the game. Keep gang bangin' and dope slangin', and those you love will keep the penitentiary doors swangin' and the cemetery bells rangin'. Increase the peace, is what we all need. That's what we call "to succeed".

I'm Back

Yeah this is Darnell. I just got back in this shhh. It's only been two weeks since I've been out but it's good. I'm about to try to go to camp.

-Darnell

From The Beat: What happened? Is it really "good" or are you just saying that because that's what people say? We hope camp works out for you, and we'll read your words from there!

All On Me

I knew it was all on me when I was twelve years old and my dad left me to take care of my sister and I couldn't go out and play with my friends and my dad looked up to me to be the man of the house when he was at work. So that's when I knew it was all on me.

-Giovani

From The Beat: How did it feel to become the man of the house? Were you proud? Or resentful? Did you try to do a really good job, or did you mess up on purpose because the responsibility was too great? Now that you're locked up, who's the man of the house?

When Did You Know It's All On You?

I think my life will be different when it's all on me because I will not have to answer to no one and I can do what I want. And I don't have to trip about anyone but myself and my family. If it was all on me now I think it would be worse than it is right now because I would take advantage of that and mess it all up.

-Lil' Bizzy

From The Beat: Why do you think you'd mess it up? What's going on with you that you don't feel up to the responsibility? Do you think it's possible that if you had to answer to yourself and no one else you'd make better decisions? If not, what do you think is so hard about independence? Keep telling your story!

Street Stories

One day me and my ninjas Jimmy, Diddy and Kimp were on the street and this dude named Sam came and asked was it rolling so we was like ninja you can't bust no knock over here brah because he tried to strip Jimmy and my other patna that had a fight wit him when he told a girl he wasn't there. So I'm walking up to Dorsey's Locker and my patna Jimmy stays so me Kimp and Diddy are walking. I turn around to say something to Jimmy and they in each other's faces.

I was waiting for this moment to whoop Sam's ass so I ran back to see what was happening. Jimmy said Sam tried to set him up, talking about let's go to 4-8 and Shattuck so they square up then Sam swings, misses. Jimmy swings, misses. So I started to make it fun.

Long story short I beat Sam's ass and then somebody called the police so Jimmy ran in a backyard with a dog and dropped his coat and came back over the fence. He told my patna Kimp had his gold ones and his crack and weed and he gave it to me and I gave it back to Jimmy. He put it in a mailbox and had some more stuff in his coat. He dropped in the backyard and he tried to get it back by that time the old man was in his yard trying to see what happened and he was asking for his coat.

I saw the police come up and I had my crack so I threw it under the car with my \$106 dollars and they saw me and the white lady asked what I threw under the car I said I was tying my shoe she grabbed my hand and asked me again but I yanked my hand away and ran then the black lady started chasing me. I hit a fence on that lady and then she hit it with me and I hit another one she was lost after that. I called my brother on my phone and he picked me up.

-Lil Eric

From The Beat: Sounds like a close call, and a too true tale of life on the streets. Thanks for giving us the straight story, without glorifying it. The Beat always wants to know more though! How did you feel about all this? What's it feel like running from the police, the police grabbing your wrist? What's it like fighting, battling, strategizing on the corner? How does it compare to being a kid, who just kicked it and played? Does it have to be this hard to become a man? Can it be done another way?

How Are You Feeling?

The way I am feeling right now is as if I am just wasting time out of my life just sitting here. I could be smoking a fat ass blunt right now with a tall can of beer on the side getting some pearl.

-Bizzy

From The Beat: We don't believe that is all you feel. We know there's more to you as a young man than sex and drugs. You can write a simple story, but you aren't a simple man. Be brave, and tell us what's underneath the party.

Being Locked Up

Being locked up in jail is like being locked up in a jungle, except in the jungle you piss when you have to.

-Daryl

From The Beat: Ok, that made us laugh, but then you left us without knowing what you really meant by your comparison between jail and the jungle. Tell us the whole story! Don't hold back on the details.

Gonna Be Cool

This is that boy Lil' Eric back in this booty juvenile hall, but I'm about to be back out in a hot minute 'cause it's nothing to me. But I'm gonna be cool when I get out.

-Lil' Eric

From The Beat: Hmmm, you seem like you've got it all together but we see through your words and behind them we know there's a real person who doesn't like being locked up and is scared that the future holds more prison sentences but can't imagine anything different. Don't just accept your circumstances. Don't assume that violence on the streets, running from police and doing time are all that there is. Allow yourself to think about different lives for yourself.

My Day In Court

What's up wit' it, Beat? This your boy! My life is coming off, sort of, because of the shh I be doing on the out! Just last week I was in court talking to my cousin, and the police in the courtroom was saying names. He said my name, and some ninja came up to me and said, "Your name G—?" And my cousin asked me if I knew him. Then he asked me, "Did I know his ...?" [To be continued.]

-Hb

From The Beat: Oh no! Why'd you stop writing? We do hope you finish this story next week. But on a deeper level, to get your life back together, you need to stop serving the devil, and then your life will get better.

Ain't No Thang

This ain't no thang I'm going to get back out soon and maybe this is what I needed. Anyways I'm going to be good.

-Scotty

From The Beat: Oh this is something all right and don't forget it. This is probably what you needed so make the most of your time.

I Ain't Trippin'

What's up wit' it, Beat Within? This your boy Young Chuckie. Before I get started on my county life, how is my homies doing? One love to all my homies.

Well, by that out of the way, I'm cool. I'm just in this box, thinking when I'm getting out, I'm up in max four, but I'm looking at camp or EM today I had court, they hold me back for one more week, then I go back I might go to camp, that's what they keep telling me, but I ain't trippin'. I'm a pimp that stuff, well gotta go, keep y'all's heads back.

One love, be safe.

-Young Chuckie

From The Beat: By the time this prints, you'll be gone — and we hope gone for good. It's not just about getting out, it's about what you do to stay out...keep us posted on what happens to you....we're hoping for the best.

Handling My Business

Ok today I'm going to write off the top of my head. Well gangbanging isn't what you think it is - there's more to it than riding around smoking, drinking and everything else you think we do. Some kick it and some cat off but there's a difference from kickin' it and handlin' your business. See I handled my business when funk came and I handled what I needed to handle. And when it comes to business like my education than I handle that too. So when I get out I'm do both. I'm out for now - stay up.

-Lil' Neph

From The Beat: So you think you can do both, eh? It would be nice if we could have the best of both worlds in certain situations but that just not the case in most situations. You are going to be facing some tough choices when you get out - some of the problems we know you have thought about but some you won't even come coming. So you have to be on your toes and ready to fight but for the first time you won't be fighting anyone else but yourself. Be strong.

Them Changes

When I get out I'm goin to make a 180 change - not a 360 because a 360 change would mean I would be turning around and going in the same way I started from. So I'm going to make a change and turn a whole different way because I am older now and it's time to start on a new state of mind.

-Change Man

From The Beat: Well you certainly sound excited about these changes and we hope your enthusiasm is matched with a solid plan and hard work.

Keepin It Truthful

Keeping it real is telling the truth and not lying - but not snitching either. Keeping it real means you don't lie to your best friend. I'm just keeping it real, and I do that by telling the truth. Yeah! So, then that's it - keeping it real!

-Demetrus

From The Beat: What about when keeping it real with one friend means telling the truth on another friend (snitching, as it were)? And what about those promises you make your momma, and then you lie to her about what you were doing with your "friends" - is that keeping it real?

Short And Sweet

Keepin it real means that you're staying solid. You don't lie and you say what's on your mind and do what you got to do.

-Scotty

From The Beat: Sounds like your definition of keepin it real is wrapped up in honesty and being true to yourself - we can appreciate that.

In Living Hell

I keep telling myself I'm living a good life, but when it comes down to it - my life is a living hell! Ninjas be hatin' everywhere I go. Ninjas hate so much that ninjas start getting they' thought put on the curb! Feel me? I'm all about me. If I go on, I'm going on by myself. I've lived in hell while I was on earth, I'll live in hell when I'm dead and gone.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: You got it all right but that last part. You've lived enough hell in your life already. Now it's time to keep your life steady and leave those hating fools behind. Now it's time to clear your mind, get yourself up off the grind, and live that good life one day at a time.

Keepin' It Real = Keepin' It Gangsta

Keepin' it real to me means you have to be ready at all times to bust that thang! You have to be getting lil' beezies, scrapin', poppin' pills, and lettin' yo' chain hang. Keepin' it real to me means you gotta get money where you from and never act like some kind of dummy. Keepin' it real is gang banging and coke slanging, but that ain't my thang. Keepin' it real is getting females - and pimpin' is the best way to get that money; it's somethin' I am good at.

-Ti Baby

From The Beat: Here you are fresh out of baby jail, at Camp Sweeney, where the judge is giving you a second chance to think through your life and how you're living it. If you don't want to go deeper into the system, maybe end up in prison (living as someone else's whore and getting pimped for the canteen store). Keeping it real, is seeing the whole deal and facing facts - change the life that got you where you're at!

Sorry Dad

I'm sorry dad for putting you through this same bull. I told you I was going to stay out of trouble and I lasted six months. Now I'm sitting in the hall going through it, praying that your going to be okay but just remember I love you.

-Scotty

From The Beat: These were obviously heart felt words. Don't be too hard on yourself - you made a mistake so now all you can do is learn from it and don't repeat it.

All On Me

People talk a lot shhh to me, and I will let them know it is not all on me! But when I came to jail, it was all on me - because I did a crime and now I am doing the time.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: The Camp is not about doing time, it's about using time to get yourself out of a life of crime. If you stick to thinking like, "Do the crime, do the time" - you'll keep doing both, and think it makes you a man. No, it makes you a fool (if you survive to do your time alive). But we can't change your thinking 'cause it's all on you.

In's and Out's of the Game

What's up wit' it, Beat? This your boy, and, man, these ninjas ain't keepin' it solid out on the outs.

And in here the ninjas you mess wit' on the outs, when they get to the hall, they want to up and snitch on you - just to get out! But it's all good, 'cause I'm gon' do my time in this max' unit and walk out those doors a free man.

-Hb

From The Beat: If you seek revenge for those you feel turned on you, you'll just be playing the game's foo' all over again. It's the nature of the game. People don't lie when they say in the game you have no friends. The only way to make it "all good" - is to quit the game and go legit when you go back to your 'hood. That's the road to freedom, and the friendships you're needin'.

I'm So Mad

I'm so mad. I did a year, did my six months probation and the next day after getting off probation, I got arrested. Anyways, I just want to say I love my family.

-Scotty

From The Beat: Ouch - we know this one will be on your mind for a while. Normally we would say don't focus too much on what went wrong and look to the future but you do need to take a serious look at what happened and why you are back. Don't let this time go to waste. The sooner you figure out what's holding you back (fear, anger, lack of faith) the faster you can start moving forward for real - it's not the game, it's not the street life - it's something inside of you.

Hope

Q-vole, Beat! This that solid vato Lil' Mark from Hayward. As for me, I'm up in this so-called max' unit wit' the homeboys, marinatin'. I got court on Thursday, and supposedly I'm gonna get six months in Santa Rita - but I don't know.

That's better than two years in the "Y" though; so hopefully I do get six months with time served. And if I do, I'll be out in late August or early September! So that's the get-down wit' me.

So, I'm'a cut the strings and send this piece to The Beat. So next time you see my piece, it will have some updates on me. Until paper meets pen - alrato vatos.

-Lil' Mark

From The Beat: We feel what you're saying about six months at county jail looking better than two years in CYA. And being free by next fall, isn't bad at all. But you know, if you don't make changes in your life, it's just a furlough - 'cause you'll get caught up again and sent right back, you know, maybe next time to the pen'. Peep game, repeating the same mistakes is straight insane.

Keeping It Real Means Keeping It Real

What's up Beat? This is yo' boy Lil' B from Hayward just dropping a couple lines, but to get to the topic at hand. I think keeping it real means is basically just keeping it real or better yet keeping it solid and just smashing for what you represent, ya feel me?

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Well we are always glad to get something from you B but next time give us just a tiny bit more. Like if I asked for the definition of dreaming and someone said, "It's like dreaming," it wouldn't really help me understand what dreaming is. Same for your explanation - you defined keepin it real as keepin it real. We know you can do better than that.

Is Jail Really Part Of This Life?

This is my seventh time in here and I ain't proud of it. Actually, I'm sick of it. My name is Jason. Most know me as Magic. Some know me as J-Dog. I was born and raised in Hayward. Well I just got here from being on the run for six months and my experience wasn't worth it. I could've been getting out in May all clear with no probation. At the time I thought running was the best solution.

When I was on the run I was always watching my back. I could never just relax unless I knew for sure I was safe and out of sight of police. When I would go to party I would see others drinking and doing what they need to do. I didn't just so if the cops came I was able to think and move quickly. But to tell you the truth, the worst part was being paranoid all the time - it's just not my style.

Well I'm going to wrap it up and just say to all stay up and be safe 'cause what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

-Jason

From The Beat: There are a lot of young men and women who run, get caught and then realize that it wasn't worth it so don't be too hard on yourself in that respect. You have been in and out of the halls several times so it's time you start asking yourself why you keep making the same mistakes even though you are not happy? If anything it sounds like this latest experience really opened your eyes about the kind of man you want to be and the kind of life you don't want to live. Jail is not a part of life and the sooner you realize that there are people out there living the good life, people just like you, the better off you'll be. The good life doesn't mean that everything is perfect, you have all the money and the world and nothing bad happens. Happiness is not about fancy cars and houses, it's about the little things, the day to day living that most of us take for granted.

Are You Playing The Game, Or Is The Game Playing You?

1. I'm playing the game of life survival. I feel like I'm a player and the game the men, the law, right from wrong .
2. I'm locked up in my head wondering if I will be able to do the good I was doing or be accused.
3. I feeling like talking to people my age. We need younger speakers, somebody that can touch their hearts their mind. That's how I feel.

-Deandre

From The Beat: Great advice, we agree with you that young people need inspiration from other young people like them who have the same struggles. We hope you can step up and be a leader for your peers – don't wait for it to happen, make it happen. And we'll do what we can too.

They Say

I say snitches get stitches
They say snitches get ditches
I stay pimpin' these riches
Like a genie they grant me wishes
I don't give 'em no kisses

-John

From The Beat: Tell us something we've never heard before John. We're glad you wrote, but we hope next time you can find your own powerful words instead of spitting out these tired rhymes.

Are You Playing The Game, Or Is The Game Playing You?

I'm playing the game 'cause I can't let the game play me. That's like trying to teach somebody something they already know, like you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it think. I can't be controlled by the game like a puppet. I have to control the game 'cause if you let the game play you then you're playing yourself. So always play the game and never let the game play you.

-C-Baby

From The Beat: Ok, our question was abstract, so you gave us an abstract answer. But think a little deeper. Do you spend your days running from police, hustling, watching your back? If so, then the game is playing you. You think it's your choice to do all this shhh, and maybe it was at first. But now you're caught in a cycle. And we know it's true, because you're here in the hall again. Wake up, and be honest with paper and pen.

Not a Hustla

I don't call myself a hustla, not even a bad guy. I'm just a lil' thug that's soft on the inside.

-Joe

From The Beat: What's the difference between a lil' thug and a hustla? Break that down for us!

Sitting

As I sit in here I think about getting out of here and I think about all things that I have done.

-Torrin

From The Beat: After you're done thinking about what you've done, be sure to spend some time thinking about what you're going to do next to make sure you don't repeat mistakes you don't want to make.

I'm Feeling Mad and Sad...

...because I am locked up in here and that's messed up, because I want to be with my girl and her family, and I am trying to go back to the group home because I was doing good in there and at school I was getting good grades.

I was on the football team. I played wide receiver and quarterback. I started too, when we played Oakland High. I had three picks and four touchdowns. I had a good game that night. The coach was happy because I scored the winning touchdown. The score was 58 to Oakland High's zero.

-Sam

From The Beat: YO unscored the winning touchdown when the score was 58 to 0??? So you scored the first touchdown? No matter what you've lost by being here, you still have what it takes to be a winner. That talent doesn't disappear just because you're locked up...your talent and smarts, that's yours, nothing can take it away from you so long as you take care of it!

Are You Playing The Game Or Is The Game Playing You?

How I'm feeling today. Well I'm feeling happy today because my PO told me that I'm going back to Tulare County. I'm going to see my mom and homies.

-MC

From The Beat: We hope you get a warm welcome when you get home. Congratulations! And stay free!

Addicted To Syrup

My favorite drug is syrup. For those of you who don't know what that is it's promethazine and codeine. In my hood ninjas will go over syrup. If you even spill the surup on the ground ninja's will sip that shhh. That's how serious that shhh is in my hood. We pay top dollar 35 for a four ounce, 75 for an 8 ounce, 120 for a 12 ounce. I will kill a ninja over my surup. I will definitely pay top dollar. I don't put that on I sip syrup

-Lil' Darry

From The Beat: That's a pretty serious addiction to sip it off the ground. You've shared a honest account of this drug's role in your neighborhood. What else can you tell us? How do you see the drug changing your friends, changing you? How do you feel when you start to come down?

San Francisco County

Growing Up

The time that hit me that I was going to be responsible for myself was when I was turning into a teen. It hit me 'cause I did not have my mom anymore. So I had to hustle for me and my sisters.

-Lil' One GU

From The Beat: You say you "had to hustle" for you and your sisters, but then, here you are, locked up. So who's "hustling" for your sisters now? Don't you feel like you let them down by doing whatever you did to let the system take you from them? Can you figure out a way to give them what they need most from you — your presence as a role model for good?

My Court Date

I go to court on the 20th of April and I'm praying to God that I get out. All my ninjas got out but they went to group homes. But that don't matter long as they got out of juvi. Wish me luck when I go to court.

-Blanca GU

From The Beat: Of course we wish you luck. If God were to grant your prayer and let you out, what are you willing to sacrifice for God? Is this a one-way street?

I Shot At My Mom

I shot at my mom because she was actin' sick with me. She was grabbin' on me and I had to pull out the .38 special because she wouldn't leave me alone. I don't let anyone dis me. We got into it and I shot at her. The bullet flew to the wall. There was a lot of blood. The bullet had grazed the wall and hit somebody upstairs in the ass.

My mom was panicked. She started shakin' and cryin'. She was traumatized. She was havin' lots of problems, because her baby boy had shot at her.

When you open a revolver, you have to shake out all the casings. I had a whole sock full of 38mm bullets. I filled the gun with more bullets. My older sister snatched the gun away from me. She was arguing with my older brother. I tried to snatch the gun back from her. She thought I was going to do some crazy shhh, like shoot my brother.

Then I had ran away. I didn't know my mom had called the cops. One of the young homies got caught, 'cause he looked like me. The cops showed him my picture and told him my mother snitched on me. They told him they were looking for me.

I got myself a little apartment, but I only had \$400 on me. Eventually I got kicked out because the rent was \$800. I was on the run for a couple a months. I got into it on the lower side of the Mission because an older OG with a Mongolian who was saying "Forget" my mom. I was going to crush his head with a bottle. The gang task force busted us, told us to get down on our knees. I was frozen in shock. They asked me my name. They took me to 850 Bryant (the San Francisco Police Station.) They took me to the interrogation room. They pulled out a tape recorder, tried to interrogate me. Asked me about the gun. I said it was a bee bee gun.

I went to court. My mom tried to stick up for me. She said the gun was a bee bee gun, too. They released me home with no probation. I had got out, had a cool lil' Christmas with my family.

Then I woke up and it was a dream.

-R LCERS

From The Beat: This is as tragic of a piece as we have ever read. If this is true story, you will carry this torture forever, and you should. You are basically telling the system you are capable of doing anything if you can be that angered to attempt to murder your own mother. Beware playing with guns, will wash you forever. This road you are on will quickly lead to an early grave or living amongst men the rest of your life. So what's the status of your relationship with your mom today? What about your anger towards her, towards yourself, are you working on making better choices? You are very lucky that bullet didn't kill anyone. After saying that, we're surprised the person you did hit didn't press charges?? What an ugly dream if that's what it was. Definitely an ugly piece.

A Brief History Of My Life

Let me tell you folks something about life. Man, since the day when I born, about six I started being bad, acting up in school, getting suspended, just basically getting into trouble at a young age. An' then, when I was nine years old, I started smoking weed and playing with toy guns. Then, when I turned eleven, I started smoking more weed an' started stealing people bikes, breaking people car windows, getting in trouble with the police. An' then, when I turned twelve years old, I started stealing people cars, driving them around, drinking, going to house parties, not going home every night, acting dumb.

I was just basically doing w'at the hell I wanted to do, an' all that stuff came back. When I was just about to turn teenager, I went to a group home for about a year an' a half. An' the next year I started coming to YGC in and out of the system, but that's all about my life so far.

-Papa B1

From The Beat: We found this interesting, Papa, but we really would like to know your thoughts about how and why this all came about. What was going on in your life at home or on the streets when you were just six and nine and eleven that caused you to want to act out in the ways you did? What causes a child of that young age to start getting in trouble with the police? You're very smart, so we're sure if you put your mind to the task, you can come up with some answers, or at least some explanations for what led you down this path so young. Now that you are no longer a child, we wonder if you're ready to start acting more responsibly like an adult? Do you have the same mentality you had before you were ten, or do you see things differently now? If you had to "act smart" what would you do?

Hopefully Getting Out

Well, I'm going to court tomorrow, hopefully I get out. If I do then goodbye Beat. Hopefully won't be writing from there again. Late.

-Pinguino B2

From The Beat: We also hope that you won't be writing us again from the inside. However, you can still write to us once you are out, or maybe even come through our office and type up a piece. Good luck!

Out Of Here

W'at's up Beat. Dis Lil' Roach. Well, it's been nice writing to y'all but I'm getting out on Friday. I'm goin' for year. Somewhere else. Well a'ight den. Stay safe. See you lata. Late.

-Lil' Roach B2

From The Beat: Well, by the time this comes out, you should be gone already. Still, we want to wish you good luck and hope that you will keep in touch with us and keep writing. We'll publish what you send us in The Beat Without section at the back.

I Wish I Was Free Of Drama

I wish I was free of drama. I don't like talking about it, but people want to hurt me and vice versa, just because I'm trying to survive out there and make my chalupas, while these other cats eat on tacos. It's hard out here in San Francisco. Cats really be hatin', and I don't be feeling that. It don't matter to me — everybody can eat. It's enough money out here for everybody.

-Money Earnin' Vernon B1

From The Beat: Vernon, what you do is illegal as well as dangerous. Sure, there is enough money out here for everybody, but there are always legitimate ways to get it for everybody. The part you can't seem to get into your head is that there are also more jail cells out there for everybody, and that if you keep doing what you're doing, one of those cells has your name on it. We're not sure, but we'd be willing to bet that you're not getting any chalupas where you are right now. And it only gets worse from here. You might count us among the haters, too, but we're waiting for you to start seeing the world through the eyes of an adult and not the eyes of a child...

Keepin' It Real

When say keep it real, I could be telling someone to tell the truth or be they real selves.

-Maurice B4

From The Beat: What does it mean to be your real self? When are you real, and when are you fake?

Game Over

When do you know it's all on you? When you are locked up. The game ain't funny any more, so you need to stop playing dose games, 'cause the games is going to get you killed or shot up. The dope game is old — the FBI or SFPD will get you. Why? 'Cause the dope game is old an' they know about it.

Pimpin', it's going to get you killed. Why? Pimpin' is fast money if you got game like me. See, me, I got game in my own way, see? I like money, so I go get it. It don't come to me. You can sell dope, pimp, an' get yo' money, but at the same time, you got to be smart about it. But in the long run, you gon' get caught.

-Man Man B1

From The Beat: Well, Man Man, here you are caught up again. It seems like the only way to "be smart about it" is not to do it in the first place. Smart or not, you're still incarcerated. We won't even comment on the crime of pimping, except to point out that every girl you put on the track is someone's daughter and someone's sister. Would you allow your sister to prostitute herself? Is she worth more than someone else's sister? Have you ever seriously considered getting out of the game entirely, before you lose it all?

Defining Myself

What best defines myself is I love to do stupid things, like stealing cars, robbing people, talking shhh to people. I love to go and chill wit' da homies. Love going to parties as in getting high, thizzlomik, getting drunk and smoking cigarettes. I love to hear rap when I go stupid do-do dumb and even talk to females. Most people would look at me and think, "He looks like a gangbanger," but nah. It's da fashion of hip-hop and plus I am a thug at dat.

-JB B2

From The Beat: Is stealing cars, robbing people, putting your life at risk, doing drugs and calling females by inappropriate names the fashion of hip-hop? Or, to put it another way, it's clear to us that in addition to all the things you love that you wrote about here, you must also love being locked up, because that's just where it leads, and will continue to lead. And who knows, maybe you do love being locked up. After all, here you get to shower every day with a bunch of boys, you get to wear someone else's old draws, you get to eat three squares a day, you get your own room, etc. Yeah, this must be what you truly love since you seem to have committed yourself to a lot more of it.

Pimp Your Ride

If I had money, I would buy an Impala and put 20s on it, make it black with black leather seats, put four amps. Da license plate would say Platinum in da back of da car and it will have spinners wit' tinted windows.

-JB B2

From The Beat: What about TVs or a Playstation?

Going To Be On My Own

It's scary knowing I'm going to be on my own soon. And knowing soon my mother is going to kick me to the curb. When I get that certain age, that's when it's time. But what if I not ready to be responsible for myself.

-Dominic B4

From The Beat: Sooner or later, we all have to take responsibility for our own actions and our own lives, and that's when you know you are grown. And yes, it is scary. But the fact that you are scared about it, and worried that you might not be ready, tells us that you probably are more ready than you know, since admitting your feelings is a sign that you're already turning into a man. Turning a certain age doesn't mean that your parents will kick you out or that you will be 100% on your own. It just means that they (and we) may expect more from you than before.

State School Exam

How I feel about the "SAT" is most of the things they put in it they don't teach you in class. And most teachers don't tell you nothin' about it until they about to give you the test.

Out of six or seven teachers, only one finds himself to care about you and tell you ahead of time that they teach you everything because they class was joking around which is most likely true.

-Mike B2

From The Beat: Mike, if the teachers don't prepare you for the SAT test, then there are ways to prepare yourself. There are plenty of resources that you can get from the library or even online to get a sense of what the test will ask and how to prepare for it. This doesn't get your teachers off the hook for not doing what they're supposed to do, but sometimes, you really need to take action and do everything yourself.

It's Time

I know I am at the age where it's time for me to get a job and take responsibility for my actions. I have been taking responsibility to go and get a job and have money in my pocket and money for my girl.

Some people out there are underage and are on their own. Some teenagers have to get a job to just put food in their mouth. Basically teenagers need to wake up and get a job and take responsibility for their own self.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: We agree that young people need to find legal ways to put money in their pockets, or face consequences like the ones you're living right now. But how does a teenager take responsibility for him or herself? How are you going to do it?

Don't Judge Me

Don't judge me
'Cause I got braids
Nice face, good looking clothes and I'm black
Don't judge me
Because when you hear the word black you
Think I'm a drug dealer, crack head or a criminal
Don't judge me
Me and my black brothers and sisters are just like the rest —
And we're maybe even the best
When I apply for a job and they look at my skin color
They think I'm like the next black brotha
Don't judge me
I'll tell ya how I really feel and won't care
I'll keep t so real that you won't even want to bare

The conversation
You'll probably want to make it into a confrontation
So when you look at by black skin
And you look at my other black, black brothas and sisters
Don't think 'cause we got a nice face, good clothes
And we're black that we're bad
'Cause when you see my face —
And all my other black brothas and sisters face
You'll already know
Don't judge me

-Young One B2

From The Beat: Well put Young One. Society should not judge someone by the way they look, how they wear their clothes, or the color of their skin. It is just unfair to those who are victims of stereotypes. At the same time, however, the system will continue to judge you for your actions. So while you're right about not judging a book by its cover, be careful of what you "write" in that book that is you, because you can definitely be judged on the contents...

When The Judge Spoke, I Woke

I realize it's all on me when the judge told me what could happen to me if I keep doing what I do. It's all on me to change. Ain't nobody can help me/ make me change but me. I gotta put my mind into changing. Ain't nobody can do it but me.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: Of course you're right, UP, nobody can force another person to change. But having said that, what are the changes you are thinking about? What do you think the consequences will be if you don't change? What's the hardest part of changing?

How Much

How much are you willing to pay to live another day?

What are you afraid of
Money isn't keen
It's the realization of a dream
In the color green
Envy
Slime
Slipping
Tripping
Through Time
Exchanging Hands
Yours
Mine

What are you afraid of
Wishing
Wanting
Never daunting
Taunting
Your Faith
Or taking a risk
Or waiting for break
To take a piss
Piss off those who scream
I'm living my dream
Stop!

-Young B B5

From The Beat: There are a lot of interesting images in this piece, Young B. Your one-word descriptions of money, for example. We had to omit the last couple of lines of your poem, but we don't think it suffers from being cut. When you say you're living your dream, what exactly do you mean? What's your dream?

Life Is Hard

I am a young black male living in the city of San Francisco. In the situation I am in, I am just dying to live. Life is hard when the law got you by the nuts and hangin'. If I was just living to die, then I be happy with my life.

But to live life is the best thing when you got everything together and when you are happy with yourself, and everything around you can live to die

-Keith B5

From The Beat: How did the law get hold of you to make your life hard? Didn't you give them the power to grab you where it hurts and hold on? Don't you have the power to take control out of their hands by the way you live your life?

Keep It "Treal"

What's up with it Beat? It's me. I'm going to keep it real, or should I say keep it real. Me and my ninja J-Gutta just got through talking about keeping it real, but I cant say much right now because I got to wrap it up until the next time. Keep it real 'cause most ninjas don't keep it real.

-Young Fabe B5

From The Beat: If this is "keeping it real," then we don't have a good idea of what you're talking about. Instead of telling us that you just got through talking about the topic, why not write what it is you were talking about so that we can be part of the discussion, too? You have the ability to get into a topic, Young Fabe, so don't take the easy way out. Tell us something!

Blast From The Past

I a keep it real. I don't give a damn. Man, I'm livin' ta die. I mean I don't just run wild like a chicken with his head cut off, but I live life every day like it was my last and do it real big like I was a blast from the past.

-Chill Will B5

From The Beat: You can write much more than this, Willie. This is like shorthand. We're trying to read between the lines to understand what you mean to say about your life, but you haven't given us enough to work with. If this really were your last day, would you be satisfied with how you lived your life, or would you wish you had done some things differently? We want to suggest that instead of living every day like it was your last, that you live every day as if it was your first! How would that change things?

Living To Party

I live every day like it's my last 'cause what do we really live for? We live to have fun 'cause we don't know when our last days are near. So me, I like to live one day at a time.

So this is how I get down. I go to parties almost every day. I tell my mami I love her every day. But now I'm living my life to do what I need to do. Once I'm out Young B will be back on the street.

-Young B B5

From The Beat: Well, Young B, party hearty because if you're back on the streets doing the things that got you here, you won't have a long time to party.

Messed Up Life

I'm just livin' to die in dis messed up world that isn't perfect. It's either you bang or you ain't shhh. When you look around all you see is violence. It's either you whippin' people ass or they whippin' yo' ass. You get shot or you shoot people. You never know what might happen the day after tomorrow, so live life to the fullest and enjoy yourself.

-Lil' Nicoya GU

From The Beat: If you mean by 'live life to the fullest' to keep doing what you've been doing, then you'll be living a large part of it as a slave, doing what strangers tell you to do when they tell you to do it. If being locked up is a way to "enjoy yourself," then don't change a thing.

Fat Thug

My name is Fat Thug. I still lock up in B5 maximum security. Fat Thug will be back in a minute. Holla at yo boy Fat Thug.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: You write almost the same thing every week, Fat Thug. When are you going to give us something different, something about your future?

Livin' Or Not

Well, you know me. I'm doin' both, yadadamean? It's nothin', though, 'cause I'm really living to die. Ha ha. Peace.

-Ngo LCRS

From The Beat: Living to die usually means that you believe that since we're all going to die some day anyway, what's the use of struggling to make your life long and productive? Is that how you feel? If so, don't you know that, with luck, you can have a long, beautiful, adventure-filled, loving life before you die someday, hopefully when you're old? Why are you so eager to forgo all that wild life between now and maybe seventy years from now? You haven't lived a third of your life yet.

My Definition Of "Keepin It Real"

What's up Beat? This yo' boy De'Aries, aka J Gutta, comin' at you with two thumbs up. Anyway, I wanna say keepin' it real ain't even in my vocabulary because so many people don't keep it real why should I? I mean you can be whatever you wanna be in the halls. Shhhh, I could tell somebody I got 100 racks and hella guns and you wouldn't know if I'm lying or not.

OK, let me give you a example. There's this ninja who swears up and down he got racks and scrapers. It's just terrible.

Well Beat I gotta windy to the room. Oh yeah, to all you people not keeping it real, stop telling them campfire stories

-J B5

From The Beat: So, "keeping it real" to you means telling the truth. And we admire you for doing just that in this piece. By saying that so many people lie that you are freed to lie also, you have kept it real with The Beat. Why do you think it's so important to people your age (or in your situation?) to front for other young people in the same situation?

Ruling The World

If the world was ruled by me, I would make everything understanding. I would make kids listen. I would make lots of food so everybody can eat. My world would be perfect.

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: We'd love to live in your perfect world. Just out of curiosity, did you listen to your parents when you were a kid? If not, how will you go about making other kids listen?

Three In One

1. All On Me: I know it's all on me when I ain't got no one I can look to and count on.

2. Keeping It Real: My definition of keeping it real is speaking without lyin' at all time no matter what.

3. Dying to Live or Living to Die: I'm gone keep it real. These are two very good questions and I understand both of them. I'm sorry to say but I'm gone have to go with living to die,

What up Beat? It yah boy, Vinny. Y'all know who I am just up here chillin' waitin' on my mail. Just got off the phone talking to my B.M. She ain't talking 'bout nothin' an' I ain't either. So I'm gone. I just wanted to say what up?

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: You're right about one thing, Vinny, you're not talking 'bout nothin'! Come on! One sentence for each topic just doesn't do it. It's the lazy man's way out. Take a little time to think about just one of our topics and give us all your best thinking about it. This is just playing.

My Life

My name is Lil C and I am going to tell you about my life. I grew up on the streets because I don't have nowhere to go. I had a girl but she don't care for a ninja today. But I got to go. But before I go, I love you. Stay down and stay off the street. To my girls I love you.

-Lil' C B5

From The Beat: How will your life change when you get out of here, Lil' C? What can you do to stay out of places like this?

Living Till I Die

The question is are you dying to live, or just live to die? The way I see it is I'm just living my life until my time is up because everyone is going to die one day and ain't nobody is going to care. Life is life and people go through different situations.

-Berlin GU

From The Beat: What do you mean nobody cares when you die? Of course people care. Everyone is attached to people who love them, and those people feel the pain of their loss. We're not sure if you believe in God or not, but if you do, then just putting in time on this earth until you die is like spitting in God's face. There is no greater gift than life. Don't piss it away!

Keep It Real

To keep it real to me mean don't try to be something you aren't, like if you say you a gangster, then you do what gangsters do. That's keeping it real.

-Shadow B4

From The Beat: So are you a gangster? We guess that coming to juvie and going to jail is part of what gangsters do. That's keeping it real.

Speak The Truth

Keepin' it real means to me is to keep it real. Whenever you talk to somebody you tell the truth and at the same time you also tell what you really feel.

Rules of da street don't mean that much because the rules of God means more times than any rules that are made by men. Rules of the street is very important also because when you live in the streets you need to learn how to keep it real and don't be a sucka and learn how to manipulate everything on the streets.

-Steve B4

From The Beat: We're confused, Steve. You seem to be saying that God's laws count for something far greater than street laws. But then you say you need to manipulate things on the streets in order not to be a "sucka." So how is that keeping it real? Would you be here if you followed God's rules? Are you afraid that if you follow God's laws you'll be called a sucka? Do you have any fear about the label God might put on you for living according to the rules of the street?

Don't Lie To Yourself

My definition of keepin' it real is to not lie to yourself. Even when it's hard to say something to someone, you should just "keep it real" and tell them 'cause you don't know how they might react. Something about this topic that you should know: keepin' it real is good to do most of the time, but there are times when keepin' it real goes wrong.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Cito, we had to leave out the rest of your piece because it was inappropriate for The Beat. But we hope you try to write that poem again using more appropriate language, because we liked the message. (We're just keeping it real...) We appreciate what you have shared with us.

My Definition

My definition of keeping it real is me. Me, I'm all the way real. Ask me anything and I'll keep shhh real and treal. So whateva y'all got to ask me, ask for real doe.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Okay, then we'll ask: Are you going to give up anything on the outs so that you don't have to return to the box? Like what? Now, keep it real...

Rest In Peace

Rest in peace to all the fallen soljahs that went through the struggle and lost their life to the streets and the gang life.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: Yes, may all those that were victims of the game rest in peace. We hope that our next generation will live better than some of us did.

Turning 18

It's all on you when you're 18. You have to take responsibility for yourself and your actions. It's all on you when you have to go out there to get a job and pay your bills. It's all on you when you're with a nice young lady and you are going to have sex. It's all on you to have protection. It's all on you to take care of yourself in life and as a young adult. It's all on you to be successful.

-Lil' Skirts B4

From The Beat: Do you have to be 18 in order to start taking responsibility for your actions? Are you the responsible young adult that you describe here?

Dying To Live

I know it's hard being in that street life, Cooking dope to sell to fiends trying to live big with excite
Some of us don't have another option to go around
We were brought up around illegal weapons that hit the ground
While I go through these phases thinking "Is this dying or is it hell?"
The sight of police putting up a yellow tape —
Sittin' on the floor empty bullet shells
Am I dying to live or am I living to die?
Even if it costs to steal from the next person just to survive

-Max B4

From The Beat: Even though you might have been brought up in a messed up neighborhood or surrounded by violence, you have a choice to follow the familiar (which includes the familiar cell), or have the courage to break from it. Of course it will be hard, but is the life you're living now, including being here, easy?

Keep It Real To Yourself

I think you keep it real by being real to yourself. You keep it real to yourself by doing something because you want to do it, not to impress your friend or anybody. You stay true to yourself by saying what's on you mind. Get off on who you mad at and you staying true to yourself.

-Bryant B4

From The Beat: We like your definition, although if you keep it too real by going off on who you're mad at, you're likely to pay a heavy price in lost freedom. Is this what got you in jail, or are you here for other reasons?

Thinking Back...

Just thinking back in time bring back a lot of memories.
Reminiscent and laughin' at the site of all my enemies.
The world then goin' crazy and now I realize why.
'Cause the devil spread its wing and he learned how to fly.
Blood rushin' through my soul
at the thought of losin' control.
I look up to the lord who telling me to hold on.
We livin' in the last days.
All my homeys passed away.
I try to survive, but I need to learn the right way.
I'm livin' to die, but yet I'm dyin' to live.
I wanna live my life to da fullest; all of my years.
But one day I gotta. That's w'at I do know.
I wanna see the outside. I want the light to show.
Show me the way down the path of heaven doors.
I gotta see Evelyn Beatrice once mo'.
And Cindy May Yung, them my grannies for life.
Both told me keep my head up. And make sure I do right.

-Hollywood GU

From The Beat: So, what happened between the time your "grannies for life" told you to do right and your being in the hall? It sounds to us like you want a better life than this, so what are you going to do to achieve it? What will be different when you get out this time?

When Do You Know It's All On You

Now that I'm in juvenile hall, I know it's all on me. I could have been out finishing probation, but I played myself by making bad choices. Now I'm in the hall and wanting to get out and make the right choices, feel me.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Art, we all make mistakes, and it seems like you have made yours and learned from them. That is the most important part. Now that you know what you did wrong, we hope you will keep to your words and make the right choices once you do get out.

Dying To Live, Or Living To Die

Me, I live to die if you ask me. Everybody lives to die, but me, I live in the fast lane, hustlin' and thuggin'. But until it my time to leave this world, I'm gonna stay thuggin' an' all that shhhh.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: So we guess what you wrote above, about wanting to get out to make the right choices was just so much hot air? Here you sound dedicated to the same old choices you've been making that lead you to this hole. Your "time to leave this world" is not written in a Big Book, but is determined by those very choices you're talking about. If you put yourself in situations like the one that led you here, you're also risking the life that god gave you. What a waste!

All Bad

Log Cabin Ranch aka Snitch House. I never seen something like this—people snitch just for the hell of it. They snitch for anything an' everything. When I came I got into two fights on the first two weeks that I came here. I caught thirty days, because it was his third fight an' because he was out of bounds—that means he was out of place, where he wasn't supposed to be, an' they haven't tell us what they gon' give us for the fight, but he snitched again, but is coo', though. Fools be snitchin', like if the Ranch got an annual snitch award or something.

-Lil' Lazy LCRS

From The Beat: Wake up youngsta, you think this is bad now, it only gets worse. Wait, especially if you continue down this path, when your own "gang" starts snitching on one another. Mark our words. This gang life brings you and all involved pain, and thanks to your ignorance this keeps places like the ranch and the hall in operation, 'cause the system makes money off your foolishness. We bet, you could care less, well your loss. Such a tragedy.

Me Or My Mom, Who's Responsible?

I think it's fifty/ fifty because I take care of myself to keep myself up, but I feel my mom is around me emotionally, physically, and financially. I try to help myself as much as possible. I feel that my mom was working too hard to reach what I needed and wanted. At that moment my father wasn't working but he was taking care of me and the house.

I felt that I needed to get my own money so my mom won't have any financial problems, so I hustled all day and night flipping my money so I don't have to depend on her. I wanted to be independent. I realized that it would hurt her even mo' if I got caught up and go to juvenile so, I slowed down and tried to apply for legit jobs.

-Dina GU

From The Beat: So what happened? How did you end up here if you were applying for legit jobs? Don't you think it's ironic that because you "wanted to be independent" you ended up in juvenile hall where you are almost totally dependent? True independence also requires responsibility. Otherwise, you just hand yourself over to strangers to depend on. What have you learned since coming here that will help you to become truly independent when you touch down?

School Improvement

What I would like to change is me improving in school. I want to get A's and B's. I want to get to college and graduate. What I also want to change is always do my homework. I want to turn my in all my assignments.

-Heidy

From The Beat: Well, Heidy, we see a connection between doing your homework and getting A's and B's. What's keeping you from doing all your assignments now? Is the work too hard, or do you just do other things that you like more? Sometimes we have to give up something we like today in order to achieve something we want even more tomorrow. You feel us?

What I'd Like To Change

I would not change myself because this is who I am. I really can't imagine myself being someone I'm not because that's called a "Fake." I hate people that try to act someone they're not. It just irritates me to see people wanting to be someone else.

-Denise

From The Beat: Do you think wanting to change things about yourself makes you a fake? Aren't there things about you that you wish were different? For example, we sometimes have a problem with losing our temper and we try to change that. Does that mean we're fake? Wanting to change some things is not the same as wanting to change all things. You can still be the person you are, even if you improve in one area or another. So tell us, isn't there anything about yourself that you'd like to improve on?

What I'd Like To Change

Although East Palo Alto is not such a good community, I would not change anything in EPA. A 'hood is a 'hood.

There are a lot of things that I would change in myself. I wouldn't change my attitude because that shows who I am and where I came from. Two main concerns that I would like to change are racism, and hatred/haters. Racism is something that I don't like at all and shouldn't happen anywhere. Also I don't like hatred — especially haters.

Well yeah, those are the basics.

-Aylet

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand why you wouldn't want to change anything about your community but you would want to change things about yourself. "A 'hood is a 'hood" doesn't really tell us anything. If there are things you don't like, why not try to change them? Also, even though you say there are a lot of things you'd like to change in yourself, you really don't give us any examples of what those things might be. We're sure you're not a racist, so that can't be what you want to change in yourself. Can you give us a hint? Are you working on the things you'd like to change? How?

Adults Sometimes Don't Listen

This school gets on my nerves because every time I get in an argument with somebody they always blamin' it on me. Then they be thinking I'm playin' when I'm serious just 'cause people be laughin' at what I say. That be gettin' on my nerves because these teachers forever takin' up for the other people. And that's stupid because when they blame it on us, they be seemin' like they tryin' to make us seem stupid.

Sometimes I don't think that they try to hear us because they think we are going to act immature about it. But sometimes people really do want to talk to them about what be going on. But when you go after school, they make it even worse because they be sayin', "Well, you know what you was supposed to be doin' and stuff like that when you didn't even come over to talk to them about that."

-Rina

From The Beat: Are you telling us the whole story here, Rina? If we asked the teachers if they always blame you for disturbances, we bet they would answer, "No, not always." We sympathize with your frustration about trying to talk to teachers or other adults and not getting heard. Why do you think adults sometimes don't even want to listen to what young people have to say? Why do you think that young people sometimes don't want to listen to what adults have to say?



Dreams

I think that dreams are to be more relaxed because you dream about things that you are worried about. You can dream about things that you fear because you want to defeat those things. When I dream I think that I can have money and I can help my family.

-Denzo

From The Beat: Your idea of dreams is a very interesting one. Do you ever dream about how to make the money you want to help your family with? What are your dreams for your future?

Yo' Mama

Yo' mama so fat she jumped in the air and got stuck.
Yo' mama so fat she jumped in the ocean and I found her as new land.

Yo' mama so ugly that when she jump in the pool, the pool jumped out.

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: You talkin' 'bout OUR mama? Well, yo' mama is so poor she can't even pay attention!

Racism is something that I don't like at all and shouldn't happen anywhere.

Two Bad Dreams

One day I was dreaming about a man that was trying to get me. And I was running and running because the man had a knife. I was kicking my brother because I thought that I was hitting the bad man. So I woke up and my brother was crying because I kicked him in the face. And I did not dream about it again. So I don't want that happen again.

Another dream that I have had is I was at a river and my friend was trying to scare me. He was hiding himself and scaring me. Once my friend hid himself and did not get out in a long time. I started to find him, and I found him dead. I started crying and finding somebody to help me. but I did not find nobody, and I woke up.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Well, the first dream was a "bad dream" for your brother, but the second dream was a real nightmare for you! Why do you think you dream about running from men with knives, or friends dying? Do you have dreams like that often, or were these the only ones? What's the best dream you ever had?

No More Guns

The thing that I would love to change in the world is like no more guns and killing. I would change like robberies and bad stuff that there is in the world. I don't want those stuff in the world because it makes your life harder and not good.

-Javier

From The Beat: We wish you could change these things too, Javier. Have guns made your life harder? What can you do to reduce the "bad stuff" in the world?

Homework

If I could change anything in the world, I would change my attitude towards homework. I can't have that kind of attitude in high school because I will always be in trouble and I will not have a good future.

-Tyrica

From The Beat: Well, this topic ties into the first one you wrote about teachers always "got something to say." If what they have to say is about you not doing your homework, then you have the power to change what they say. If the homework is too hard for you, can you get help? A tutor? If the trouble is not how hard it is but only your attitude toward it (you hate it), then it's all on you to make a difference. There are things all of us have to do in the present (young and old alike) that we don't like in order to achieve something we do like in the future. Think about it.

Change

In my life I want to change my hair to black. And also I would like to change my personality.

I would also like to change world peace and world hunger. I want to change the President to John Kerry.

-Ovier

From The Beat: Changing your hair to any color you want is as easy as buying some hair dye and doing it! We see people with blue hair, bright red hair, orange hair and even rainbow-colored hair, so black is pretty tame. The other things you want to change are more serious, and much more difficult to accomplish. What can a person (you?) do to make the world a more peaceful place or feed the hungry? As for John (not Thomas) Kerry, we can't undo an election, but we can make a change at the next election in 2008.

A Lot Of Changes

What I'd like to change is the school close and the punishments. When you don't do your homework they call your house and get you in trouble. I'll also want to change people not selling drugs or making them. Or I would like to change the laws about people coming to the USA to work and the drivers licenses. Also our parents getting paper. Also how to change the amount of money you have to pay for a house and the amount of money for the cars.

-I Smell Pan

From The Beat: You have listed quite a few things you'd like to change, but you didn't give us many details. You could make your writing much stronger by explaining a few of the things you wish you could change. For example, what kind of changes do you want to see concerning people coming to the US? What do you want to change about licenses? What do you want to change about how your parents get "paper" or money? You've done a good job of writing about the "what" but you've left out the "how" and the "why."

A Seal Named Otter

One day the science class was going on a field trip. We were going to the Bay Aquarium. There we saw tons of sharks and stuff. I asked my best friend, (who's a boy and I'm a girl), to let me borrow his sweater and he said yeah.

Later, he bought me a seal and we argued (friendly fight) over what it was. I'm an animal expert and I said it was a seal and he said it was an otter. Till this day, we say it's a seal named Otter. So anyways, my best friends, Jorge, Rafa and Victor signed it. I still have it. Oh, and friendship has no stinkin' value.

-Wizzy

From The Beat: How can you leave us with that last line hanging in the air? Of course friendship has value... so what happened to yours that makes you say that? Are you an expert on all animals, or just seals and otters? It sounds like you had a wonderful time, even if you did have an argument with your friend. Are you planning to go again?

Change My Grades

What I would like to change is all of my grades and get straight A's. That's the only things I would like to change. And also this school because I don't like rules they have in here. I would like to change my attitude when I get mad because when I get mad I go crazy.

-Lupe

From The Beat: Well, Lupe, you start by saying that the only thing you want to change is your grades, but then you add several more things you'd like to change also. What are the rules in the school that you don't like? What are you doing to work on your attitude so that you don't let your anger get you in trouble?

Bad!

I'm bad! I tell you off and don't give a damn because I'm bad and I know it. Don't hate on me 'cause I tell it how it is. I know you want to be like me 'cause I'm a boss. I floss. 'Cause I'm bad. I'm so sorry dat you try and try. Then I give you your little bit of time to shine. But when I step through da door, I'm da one and only star. I'm so sorry. I'll try my best to not make you look your worst. But I'm bad. I can't help it.

-Jamaican Candy

From The Beat: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You're bad. We heard. Now, could you write us something that means something. To be honest, we don't really care if you're a boss or not 'cause we meet a lot of bosses every week — in juvenile hall. So we hope you rethink your game, or at least treat The Beat to something different.

Changes

Have you ever thought about if changes can be a good thing or a bad thing? Well yeah, lately I have been going through a lot of different changes in my life, especially in school. I mean I'm getting my work in on time, but I think I got a cussin' problem.

Yesterday I got a referral for cussin' out my teacher and almost got suspended. But, thank God, I only ended up getting two hours of detention. I think the choice that I made to use destructive language affected me a lot after the situation. Although I didn't get in that much trouble I was still disappointed for myself because I knew that I could have handled the situation better than just cussin' and actin' out.

Today is the day I try to change the way I act, respond and do everyday things because I know I don't want to live my life getting in trouble all the time. Some of my role models have told me "change begins with the individual." So yeah, today is the day that I try to change my ways. I have spoken...

-Dat Bay Chick

From The Beat: You have not only spoken, but you have spoken very well. You sound more like an adult than a child. We agree with you that you could have handled the situation better, but that is something that could be said about all of us sometimes. The fact that you recognize it is the important thing. We also have our own problems with anger and cussing, so sometimes when we're feeling like cussing someone out, we try to imagine that person as a small child or even an infant, and the anger goes away. You might want to try it. We think the most important lesson you are teaching here is that change not only starts with the individual, but it starts today, not tomorrow. Well done. Thank you.

Da Pimp

Yo, I see pimps everywhere. It's like a ninja in a suit. A no good for nothin' ninja. A ninja who got women, but dat ninja is broke. But these females don't understand dis ain't no game. Me ain't no pimp. I just spit game. It ain't my fault. Some girls look hecca good.

-Who Kyd

From The Beat: What are we going to do with you, Mike? You have such high ambitions for yourself (college, a career, etc.) but you write about such nonsense! We even had to take your last line out because we don't want anyone learning from pimps — except how NOT to act! Come on... we expect much more from you. (As Charlie Brown once said, "Potential is the biggest curse of all...")

Changing Me

I'd like to change the way I talk and walk because of what people think. Because I walk like this they think I am bad. So I would like to change so people won't think I am a bad kid. So that's what I would like to change about me so people can think different about me. Because people think that because you dress with saggy clothes and walk like I do they think you are bad. So that's what I want to change.

-Chino

From The Beat: We're not sure if you want to change the way you dress and walk or you want to change the way people think about you. In the end, Chino, you can't control what people think. If they want to judge a book by its cover, then they are the ones who lose. We haven't seen anything in the way you walk, talk or dress that would make us think you are bad. So just continue being good, and don't worry about what people think!

Crime In EPA

Something I'd like to change is crime in EPA. I want to change the community. It's sad in some communities. It's hard to go outside without getting shot. It disturbs a lot of people to go to that community. Like in EPA crime gets higher every year. The community puts different laws and it does not work a lot. So people don't care about the crime and community.

-Oscar

From The Beat: We wish we knew why so many people seem to have so little respect for the lives of others (and even their own lives). What do you think would be the most important thing the community or government could do to make EPA a safer place? What can you do?

I'd Like To Change Everything

I would like to change my whole life around to the point when both of my parents was still together because that's what's wrecking my life. I would love to work on my attitude. I want to work on that because most people say that's something I really need to work on, and I know I need to work. But when I try to work on it, someone always comes around and mess it up to the point my attitude is going to automatically change and get bad again.

When I try to be nice, it's like they want me to start yelling and cussing them out. And it hurts deep inside because I be trying to change. I try not to yell. I used to talk about people every day, but I stopped because I thought that wasn't nice and instead I just say nice things about them. People must really want them to yell and cuss at them because they do stupid stuff to make me mad. They think talking about it is going to solve things. But you know like they say, change begins with an individual.

-Princess

From The Beat: And they're right, change does begin with the individual. That's why we don't think it's useful to point your finger at others to explain why you can't change something about yourself. (You wrote that someone always comes around and tries to mess up your attempts to work on yourself, as if it is they're fault.) You stopped gossiping about people because you decided it wasn't nice, so we are sure you can change the other things you'd like to change about yourself, like your attitude. We wish you could change your parents' relationship, but unfortunately, that's for them to work out or not. We know it must be very hard on you, and all we can say is that it won't always be so hard. You just have to hang in there.

What Dreams Are Made Of

"Have you ever seen such a beautiful night?
I could almost kiss the stars for shining so bright
And when I eva think about you,
I go oh, oh, oh

"Hey now, hey now this is what dreams R made of
I've got somewhere I belong
I've got somebody to love
But this is what dreams R made of"

This is part of a song that I like. It keeps me going and gets me away from my problems. When I hear of it I think of a lot of things. I don't like to tell no one 'cause they'll keep bugging me and asking me. So yeah, anyone can get this or copy it. Hope it helps people who need it. So peace out.

-Wizzy

From The Beat: Thanks for explaining what this song means to you, Wizzy. Which verse do you think about more, the one kissing the stars or the one thinking of somebody to love? What kind of problems does this song help you get away from? We don't want to get into your business, but can you tell us some of the things that you think about?

What I'd Like to Change

The first thing I want to change is I want to lose weight because I feel that I'm not able to do certain things because of my weight. Another thing I would like to change is the president. He's an idiot. He sent a whole bunch of people to Iraq three years ago and a large amount of people's families are dead because of Bush.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: As to your first "problem," we know how hard it can be to lose weight. We've had to go on many diets over the years, and we hate it. (Because we love to eat!) But if you cut down just a little, especially on that junk food, and if you're patient, we bet you'll lose weight. As for the second "problem," we're afraid we're stuck with Bush until the next election. We agree with you, too, he's sent more than 2,000 American men and women to their deaths in Iraq!

Community Change

The thing I would change is our community. I would change my community because there is a lot of violence. In December an officer was killed. Additionally, there is a lot of drugs involved in our community. Drugs are destroying our community. These are the things that are destroying our community.

-Frijolero

From The Beat: These things are like a plague, and they are destroying a lot of communities. It tells us a lot about you that you want to change these things in your community, and we hope you find success. But the most important thing you can do about these terrible problems is not to become a part of them yourself.

They Call Me Midnight

Why they call me Midnight
'Cause I'm black as night,
Eyes of dark and passion,
And late as the midnight sky.
Think of dark, think of me
Midnight black and
Dark as the sky in my eyes
And long as my hair
But why they call me Midnight
Please don't make me start telling tales

-Midnight

From The Beat: We hope you don't mind that we put your writing into the form of a poem because what you say is so very poetic. Of course, that last line is very mysterious. Why would you have to start telling tales — and what tales would you be telling?

Hating School

I hate this school. These kids get on my nerves. They always talkin'. They don't ever shut up. Watch, one day I'm gon slap them girls!

And another thing. These teachers, they always got something to say, and it's too many rules. We can't do nothin'. But they teach us a lot. We got the highest test scores in East Palo Alto.

-Tyrice

From The Beat: It's too bad that so many things about this school get on your nerves. But when we read that your school got the highest test scores in EPA, then we can see you are in the right place, even if things do get on your nerves. Do you think that maybe it's your attitude that makes everything seem so bad to you? Can you do anything about yourself to make life here any easier?

Skin I'm In

I'm in a cover that holds me close
Something that holds me together
And that's the skin I'm in
I'm different in a way from everybody else
My skin is darker than yours
'Cause it's my skin I'm in
I'm short, athletic and beautiful
And thinking clear ahead about what next
meal I'm about to eat
Because that's the skin I'm in
From my head to my feet
It's all of me
From my black luscious skin
To the jet black hair on my head
It's all me and it's the skin that I'm in
The soul in me holds secrets
You wouldn't believe that I've held so long
inside
That if I told you you'd be like
"Girl, why?"
Or break down and cry
But until then, they lie inside
Within the skin I'm in

-Midnight

From The Beat: This is a hecka fine poem! We are very impressed both by what you write and how you write it. We love how you use the metaphor of skin to enclose all that's inside you, including your secrets! If you apply the same intelligence and writing skills to your school career, we believe you have a great future ahead of you. Can you tell us what inspired this wonderful poem?

Rep The Bay

I rep the Bay
Therefore, hey
I rep the Bay
Every day
I rep my 'hood
I rep my street
I rep the Bay
With the beat in me

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: What does it mean to you to "rep" your 'hood or your street? Does this mean that if you lived on another street in another 'hood, you'd rep that? Do you think it's reasonable or that it makes sense for young people to go to war over which 'hood or block or color to rep? How do your "rep" yourself?

Don't Swear

People swear to parents. That ain't right. Tell the truth because you'll get punished from God. They say it's not true, but others do, so that's why you have to believe in yourself and God that you are a good kid, not a bad one. Like I always say, liars don't care, but the truth is always right.

-Weasel

From The Beat: We agree with you, Weasel. When you start lying, it gets harder and harder to untangle what's true and what's not true. A very famous writer from England, Sir Walter Scott, wrote two hundred years ago: "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!" We think you and Walter Scott are saying the same thing.

Marin

Be Real To Yourself Before You Be Real To Others

My definition of "Keepin' It Real" is sticking to the rules of the game, being real to yourself before being real to others.

Never try to impress anybody. It's just basically, you can't be talk, 'cause if you talk about it, be about it. In the 'hood, "no snitching" is also a part of sticking to the rules, so if you commit a crime and get caught, then do the time.

I feel I keep it real all the time, 'cause it ain't no need to be fake or lie to nobody.

-James

From The Beat: You seem to have a clear idea of what's cool, fair and honorable, James. That should sustain you through lots of trouble and fun. Do people tend to trust you, because you adhere to your own code? You go!

Keepin' It Real!!!

I'm keepin' it real
Wit' the way I feel
When I don't like somebody
I let them know, 'cause that's just me
'Cause if you ain't from the 'hood and you a snitch
You a sucka and I'm free
Keepin' it real is when you say the truth about everything
And I'm writing this poem to let everybody know
That I'm keepin' it real with The Beat Within

-Juan

From The Beat: If you don't like someone, why can't you just leave him/her alone? No one needs to know that one isn't liked, come on, you know what's up! Keep it real next time.

If You' Gonna Talk, Talk To Someone's Face

Keeping it real means when you' up front about something. When you real, you ain't bullshhh, like if you gonna talk shhh about someone, don't do it behind their back, say it to their face! And if you can't do that, then don't say it at all. If you' gonna brag about something, make sure it's real.

So next time you wanna do something, make sure you' keeping it real.

-the keepin' it real kid

From The Beat: That's right, but then again we all fib a little something, at times, like making things sound bigger and better than what they really are, like when one catches a fish, they'll say they caught a whale instead of admitting they caught a guppie.

What I Do In My Room

Hey, what's up, Beat? This Santiago from MCJH, and I am going to write to you about what I do in my room.

First, I read, then I write or draw. When we are in our rooms for a long time, I think about the people who are outside, like my brothers and my family and my friends. Then I think, what are people going to say when I get out? Are they going to talk to me? Area they going to say, "Get away, you criminal?"

OK, Beat, got to go. Peace.

-Santiago

From The Beat: Tell us more about what you write about? Are you a letter writer? Are you studying? Studying what? As for thinking about what others think, that's so normal, how we attempt to figure out how one may interpret us, given where we are, or what has happened. Well, sure maybe some people will want to stay away, given the alleged crime and the stereotypes behind incarceration, yet that's their choice, and the ones who have love will be there with open minds to embrace you.

Desde Que Vine De México

Mi vida comenzo desde que me vine de México porque cuando yo estaba allá, yo me sentía atrapado o encerrado por tanto problemas que yo tenía. Esos problemas los tuve con mis amigos, hermanos, y mis padres.

From The Beat: ¿Como te sentias atrapado allá? ¿Que o quien te atrapaba? ¿Como te sientes ahora? ¿Que clases de problemas pudistes tener con tu propia familia?

Ever Since I Came From Mexico

My life began when I came over here from Mexico because while I was over there, I felt trapped or locked up with all the problems that I had. I had those problems with my friends, brothers, and with my parents.

-M

From The Beat: How did you feel trapped over there? What or who had you trapped? How do you feel now? What kinds of problems were you able to have with your own family?

LIL' DROOPY

The brutally honest Lil' Droopy is back in The Beat and we are so glad to hear from him. Droopy was once a prime time writer and reader in our 150-3 max unit classes well over a year ago. Upon turning 18 he was transferred to the adult system, Santa Rita County Jail, where at the time of this writing he was fighting for his life. We do hope to hear from our old friend down the road, until then here is what we have from the man known as Lil' Droopy

Malt Liquor Mickey

My girlfriend Mickey
wanted me to pound it
She said I could have all her 40 ounces
when my lips touch her lips
You get a head change
It feels good but not right
'Cause that's when my girl Mickey
Took over my life
She made me do things
I thought could neva be done
I knew it was dangerous
But she made it sound fun
I started to realize
All she did was peer pressure
That was after she talked me into taking moms keys off the dresser
She said lets fo got a ride
I said I had a bad feeling in my tummy
She said you would do it if you love me so off we went
To pick up her friend Henney on 5th Ave.
My visions getting blurry
We should go back home
I kept on swerving
BOOM
What was that
I think you hit a person
Damn now the police are comin' to get me
I knew I shouldn't have messed with malt liquor Mickey

my girl Mickey

Took over my life

She made me do things

I thought could neva be done

I knew it was dangerous

But she made it sound fun

RIP Popeye

It was just another day in jail for me, it was all about to change. Mail call, I got a letter from my boy Smokey up at 150 (Alameda County Juvenile Hall) and it wasn't what I was expecting to hear. I was informed that a good homeboy I got to know very well while I was incarcerated at 150 was found dead in his room.

I only knew him for a couple months, but we became good friends, we could relate with our past life. We used to chop it up all day, but I felt like a part of me left. I felt like I lost someone I knew forever. I don't understand when things like this happen. I've been livin' my whole life running from death, duckin' and dodgin' bullets tryin' to live to see 21.

You must really be hurting inside, to end your own life. I wish I could have been there to talk to him but now he's in the safest place possible watchin' over us no more pain or sufferin'. RIP Popeye.

Broken Home

Just 'cause you come from a broken home,
do it mean you got a broken heart?
It's never too late to have a fresh start
I'm sick of these excuses
Why in life you could've make it
'cause mommy and poppy wasn't home
And your refrigerator vacant
How hard is it to go and apply for a job
Instead you take the easy way
To sell dope and rob
If you put some effort in life
You might see them finer things
But if your goin' the way you're goin'
your gonna keep getting shattered dreams
since you can't get right
but you got what it takes
just listen to me
and learn from my mistakes.

What's The Point

If you're gonna keep doing wrong
What's the point of getting out
You're just gonna keep hurting your family
And probably get life without.
what's the point of living
If you don't want to improve
Why do you live this life
This life that you choose of robbin', banging, killin',
slanging
You gotta have patience
Good will come when the time is right
It just doesn't happen every night
Pick up the Bible
find the light
put down the guns, drugs, and knives
I'm just giving you advice
but do what you do
at thirty years old
will you still be in the same shoes

Rest In Peace Paradise Popeye

We connected the moment we met
'Cause we shared the same pain
But now that you're gone
I dedicated this piece in your name
We met this past summer
Postin' up in max
When beef popped off
We watched each other's back
It seems like we've been coo' forever
You was like the brother I never had
Was your life full with that much pain
that you had to choose death
I'm still keepin' a memory of your name
It burns in my chest
When my day comes
We'll reunite and kick it
Ask God if He'll send me
My one way ticket
As you watchin' over me
While I'm locked behind these doors
You probably sippin' Crystal with 2Pac Shakur
I know you're watching over me
Give me a sign
And guide me thru this mission
This mission of life
RIP Popeye

When Time Stops

When time stops
The doors lock
No more loved ones
But don't show no fear
When you're livin' in a place
Where a day and a month
Is the same as a year
When I write a letter
Don't know the date
Didn't even notice I passed up some holidays
I could tell I'm gettin' older
By lookin' at my face
But I forgot my age
'Cause if you're at where I am at
You don't have a birthday
If you got a release date
Stay away and don't get close
'Cause some people right next door ain't ever goin'
home
Their situation's drastic their only way out
Is ridin' in that casket
If you don't wanna listen
Flip the page
That's fine
But there ain't no clocks
In the land of dead time

LIL' DROOPY (CONT.)

Can You Feel

Can you feel me
Probably not
'Cause I'm in a place where pain don't stop
They say Heaven is nice
And Hell is hot
But whose to believe in a situation like this
When you're homie from the hood turned out to be a
snitch
But that ain't the end
They tryin' to say I blasted my child hood friend
But I'll be home
God's gonna help me win
'Cause since day one I've been innocent
But if you can feel me
Keep your head high
'Cause there's a life after this
on the day we die.

DANNY MAN

Welcome back to grace our pages of
The Beat Without, Daniel Thompson
aka Danny Man. Danny Man writes to us from the CDC (California
Department of Corrections) in Tracy, CA where he is currently serving his
time. Danny Man wrote a wonderful letter to life, called "Dear Life," as
all you readers will read below. In his piece, he asks "Life" itself some
questions and challenges "Life" about certain things that has happened
to him. We hope you will enjoy Danny Man's pieces and hey, we might just
make it our next topic, Dear Life....

Sun Burn Sun

The intense light that shines on me guides me
indirectly,
Exposes me to enmity in disguise,
Sun burn sun
The Fahrenheit of a precarious life is clearly a revelation
of a nefarious life.
Sun burn sun
To mortify me in the nocturnal desolate streets
And obtrude my presence on instinct... reason!
Sun burn sun
Never the less I whittle ones effort of pressure and
degree,
Inverse purposes of ones unearthly presence...
And manifest my incentive!
Sun burn sun...
Will be continued

Burn Life Burn

Never am I ever meager in faith,
The variation of my stature of my merciful integrity.
Burn life burn
Without a louse of vestige or unbound hate,
Allows me to proceed forth only to be found in grace
Burn life burn
The old evil wicked ways of the solemn odious vindictive
pariah,
Delivered from evil and blessed with a new life
Burn life burn
Sun burn sun
It doesn't hurt to be saved.
Read your Bible

Dear Life

Carry me fairly through the valleys barriers although it
seems as though pandemonium's gone, don't hand me
over to the wrong choice because I was never known for
making the right decision(s). Only the clamor of my spirit
knows my intuition and only you know where I'll be before
my aspiration. You've been good to me so far even though
you bereave me of my freedom and leave me behind bars
to unfold chagrin feelings. Every occurrence Life is a sole
purpose and I truly believe you placed me in this situation
for a reason. So I can't be mad.

You know Life, sometimes I look at the walls in my cell
only to see them stare back at me as if they're the eyes
of reality and like on a big screen. I can see my mistakes
and faults in life. Life! I never understood the virtues of
obedience and self-discipline. For I always thought that they
were techniques of a shoddy ignorance and would never
give me the strength of mind to prosper in life in general.
But this is what I get for thinking, huh!

Hopefully everything will turn out to be better in the
future, and in the meantime Life, I'll still be wondering
numerous why's, how's, what's, where's and when did you
decide to plan my future and how is it that only you are able
to lounge with Mr. Fate and Ms. Destiny? Why do tragedies
come as life goes on? I lost my aunties, my uncles and my
grandmother recently, so what is it that you're trying to tell
me Life? Could I be next, if I don't change now? Or every
time I do wrong will you take away my loved ones and my
freedom.

Who are you to say who lives or die? If you're Life, then
why can't you make life better? I know that every individual
is held accountable for their own actions, but who's
responsible for murderer's and the lives they take? Who?

Who's responsible for the ballistic intentions of fear,
tragedy, danger, and calamity and temptation? We need
to see eye to eye on things Life, because as of now, to me
you're like a Soduko and jigsaw puzzle all in one. You are
extremely difficult to figure out. I'm a firm believer of the
saying, "life is what you make of it". I know for sure I want
to change and move on to be somebody rather than nobody.
I was once told that only a fool finds wisdom in evil conduct,
but a man of understanding delights in wisdom. Sounds
true to me and one day I hope I can be a wise guy. I'm out.

JARED DURBOROW

We are more than pleased to bring to you this outstanding poet out of the Department Of Human Services Division Of Youth Corrections in Salt Lake City, Utah. From "The Sadness," to "Happiness," to "The Phone Call," to "The World Around," this poet blesses us with very innovative creations. We have a thing for poets here at The Beat, so we were already excited when we opened the envelope to find jaw dropping poem after jaw dropping poem. But after really reading through them and realizing that these aren't you average poems, we had no choice but to wonder why we didn't drop these earlier. Well, obviously we're busy doing what we need to do to get The Beat out to you the reader. Hopefully, Jared will continue to be busy writing these incredible poems. He holds a lot of power between those fingers. Keep blessing us with it. We really enjoy your writing.

Numbers Of Life

One breath starts a life
Two eyes will see it through
Four ever I'm with you
Five fingers count the way
Six things I'll never say
Seven days a week I'll show you
Eight corners to a cube
Nine ways to cook a dish
Ten days I sit here thinking
How incomplete life can be
Without the brush of an angels wing
My mind has branched like the twigs on a tree
Bundled down into life's large trunk
That's what life's about, the will to share
To find life's force we must go down and take a dunk
Here we find the roots, a story, a legacy of those who care
The giving life force for body, soul, and mind
Your roots, your life force might surprise you to the core
One thing, which your soul rings true,
Puts you in a mental bind
You'll see all those you know and care but there's more
People that you wouldn't expect to be here
People who left an impression on your life all the same
As you recognize them all, you carefully wipe away a tear
One breath starts a lifetime forever to be grown

9-11-2001

Fear grips the heart of those aboard the planes
Millions die from terrorist's whims
Billions cry from the horror of it all
The mental fight of those involved
Four planes were chosen to hit their targets
Number one for the south
Number two strikes the north tower did a plane strike
Number three descended for the pentagon and met its mark
Number four was destined white house at the capital
Lost its mark as those from the flight 93 won the fight
But to save the capital they lost their lives
None who had known, lived,
And remembered that fateful date
They will solemnly say I survived the horror of 9-11-2001
Were all those who died at terrorists hands
Will not be lost and forgotten
But rather they will be glorified
Glorified as they who fought a never ending battle
One fought against those who fought against peace
Let us remember the passengers and crews
Of flights 11 and 93 as well as all the other victims
They fought well aboard their flying tombs of metal
Setting aside a path of the truth to family friends and nation
We will always remember your name in our hearts
People across America salute you and the world.
-This poem is dedicated to all those who lost their lives on
the terrible day of 9-11-2001

Happiness

The head goes light
Your eyes flash bright
Your heart thumps joyfully in the chest
You feel number one, better than the rest
Sky and clouds seem to circle the head
Soul flings forward the illness I shed
The bloods run faint
Joy I'll paint
Time will just up and fly
Sweet as cherry pie
Never before have I felt this grand
My heart it flutters
The pure pleasure my heart mutters
Never before have I felt more alive
Into pure ecstasy I will dive

Were all those who died
at terrorists hands
Will not be lost and
forgotten
But rather they will be
glorified
Glorified as they who
fought a never ending
battle

To A Mother

You have always been there for me
When I've been at my lows
You've helped me and others to see
We're special not stupid or slow
I've known you as a mom a friend
One who's helped me out
I'll be your family to the end
This I will always yell and shout
You given so much to others
That nobody can take away
I say this for all my sisters and brothers
We love you mom all in our own way
Don't let what others say to you
Leave you hurt, sad, or depressed
We all know what is true
That you have always given your best
So mom I give you this with my love
To show you how much I care
And I pray to the stars above
That we won't have so much to bear
If there is anything that I can do
To help them while they're in need
Tell me what I can do for you
'Cause you've taught me not to show greed
I love you mom with all my heart
I want to thank you for all you've done
Like it said in this poems start
I'm proud to be your son.

JARED DURBOROW (CONT.)

The Sadness

The sadness creeps out from deep within
To reveal man's most mortal sin
The heart contracts the blood runs chill
As your eyes begin to fill
Deep down you feel lower than the rest
As ice cold claws pierce your chest
The face goes hot, your eyes they burn
As hot liquid ice droplets begin to turn
And fall with a vengeance onto your lap
You feel yourself entering the trap
Unable to hold back you unleash the flood
Your heart, it sinks and you feel like mud
Eyes burn red as your body shakes
Every ounce with the sobs it takes
There comes a point where you feel low
Out of tears and the sobs you let go
Life seems to be seen through the eye of a needle
You sit there and rock
You can't even talk

Peace Be To You

Peace be to your hearts
To all who are in need
To all with problems that hinder
To all whom soul sleeps in streets of fire
To all those who have been accused to no avail
To all who search but can't find
To all who give but never receive
Peace be to your hearts
For all shall be make amends

Peace be to all your souls
To all who have been hurt to the core
To all who carry without comfort
To all whose soul has been crushed
To all whose religion has been torn away
To all who nurse a deep pain across their soul
To all who cry themselves to sleep
Peace be to your souls
For you shall be lifted

Peace be to your minds
To all who suffer from mental afflictions
To all whose feeling have been trodden to the dirt
To all who have felt the pain of others cruelty
To all whom others have demoralized
To all who have feel low and worthless from within
To all who question their mental strengths
Peace be to your minds
For you shall be uplifted

Peace be to the flesh
To all who are lame, blind, dumb, or deaf
To all who are sick of dying
To all who suffer from retardation
To all who are injured and hurt
To all who deal with loss of limb
To all who suffer pain unbearable
Peace be to the flesh
You shall soon know joy

There is a plan for us all
And we are given afflictions
Things to help us learn and grow
Until we are ready to move on
Into the course of our existence

The Phone Call

The elderly man sits at the phone
Waiting for a loved ones call
The old man's been waiting for the tone
For many years trying not to let his heart fall

Day in and day out
The old man would sit
Always without a doubt
For the call that would bring him from the pit

With heart leaping to this throat
The phone tones its ring
The elderly man picks up mid note
The old face alive with zing

Hello! Hello! Shouts the exuberant man
But when he answers the man sinks down low
And hangs up for it isn't granddaughter Trish or grandson
Dan
The old man sits his face no longer aglow

Once again the man was shot down
By a salesman or the such
He thought of a time drifting the town
But sadly this didn't help much

But over time this man's heart grew weary
Waiting for the call that never came
And soon his life grew short and weary
At the phone he would stare

Once again the phone took a buzz
Thinking it another prank
He ignored the phone changing into P.J.'s with fuzz
While he let his heart sink

Three times more the phone would ring
But grandpa just ignored it
Then finally on the fourth grandpa sang
Alright I'm coming don't have a fit

Hello? Demanded him into the phone
Grandpa? A small voice came through the line
Falling to his chair grandpa began to cry and moan
Finally he had got his call but was almost out of time

We love you grandpa
Shouted the small voice
Trish and I wish you saw
This is the best grandpa said eyes growing moist

Sad to say grandpa died that night
With a number to dial
He died that night without a fight
But rather a broad smile

Once again the man
was shot down
By a salesman or the such
He thought of a
time drifting the town
But sadly this didn't help much

JARED DURBOROW (CONT.)

The Dare

Enter souls if you dare
To find how you will fare
As you enter life anew
Learn it all clue by clue
You'll enter life with a cry
Cold and wet there you lie
Your quest is life
Of happiness and strife
Live life well
Or you'll be in a living hell
Your life will change time again
At the time you'll not know when
But live well and see
A grand life for thee
But live in bad sake
The inner demon will awake
When life's over at the end
To the spirit world we will send
Till again you chose the dare
To live life's dare

Live life well
Or you'll be in a living hell
Your life will change time again
At the time you'll not know when
But live well and see
A grand life for thee
But live in bad sake
The inner demon will awake

The Nights Of The Storm

It was late one stormy eve
Lightening crashed and thunder rumbled
A scared little Damien yelled with a heave
Daddy! Daddy! While out of bed he tumbled
Up the stairs Daddy starts with a leap he ran
Right to Damien's scared little side
With a gentle pat upon the head with Daddy's big hand
Into his arms Damien turns to confide
Scared he was of the lights and noise
Well Daddy told Damien with a thought
It's just the games of the great playing toys
Toys? Damien said, like the ones we bought
Sort of replied Daddy with grin
But they play high up in the sky
Do they bash their heads of tin?
Yes little Damien they also fly
Fly repeated Damien eyes gleaming with glee
Yes now my son, tell me has a toy ever hurt you?
No. Not one has never hurt me
Good now go to sleep until the morning hue
But Little Damien was already out.
Dreaming of toys playing in the sky
Quietly Daddy left the room with out a doubt
And Damien gave a content sigh
Sure you're scared of those noises and lights
But just remember and those noises and noises lain
And sleep peacefully till the sun is high
So remember this
Whatever be your name

The Green Book

The green book of life
Is open to all who look
All you need is to open your eyes
And see the pages of your book
At times they are sharper than a knife

But you must the pages as stone truth
They depict tales of fortune and fate
And all the history of life
Look and you'll open truth gates
And even find the fountain of youth

Then without warning the page will turn
And show a new side to the many faces
Each a view of what you have become
A constant reminder along your paces
The book will show when your light is dim

With life you will see many aspects
Of the subliminal self within
The life of your personal shadows
The record of what you lose and win
That a course from your show of life's respect

Just remember to follow your spirit life
For it will guide you on your way
As the pages turn on the book of life
For both right and wrong you shall pay
And life will change as swift as the dart

The World Around

Velvet black the sky above
Upwards looms a bright star
I feel the life in the trees all around
With the fresh sent of all alive
The birds above how sweet the sound
Crackle of a burning fire
The magic of life's sweet force
Embracing all that is alive
Through the gods and goddesses course
As an infant the mother does nurse
So for the world we must care
Until we improve the universe
Here we learn in life's great lair
We must always live together
Mother, father, son, and daughter
Live and love all forever
With the virtues of courage, truth and honor

With life you will
see many aspects
Of the subliminal self within
The life of your personal
shadows
The record of what
you lose and win
That a course from your
show of life's respectv

Don't Harm Free Speech

In the last several weeks, we have seen the Muslim world inflamed in a way virtually unpredicted in our lifetime. Protestors have rallied and cried out, set Danish and Norwegian embassies ablaze and boycotted Danish products.

What is the cause of their outrage? A military invasion? A new international policy that offends Muslims? No, something much simpler: a cartoon image of the Prophet Muhammad.

It was a collection of political cartoons in the Danish magazine Jyllands-Posten, one of the featuring Muhammad wearing a turban with a fuse coming out of it. That ignited hatred from Muslims around the world.

The issues concerning these cartoons is whether or not the responsibilities of the press obligate newspaper and magazine editors and publishers to censor editorial content that may offend someone's religious beliefs.

The Vatican, in response to the publication of the cartoons stated that, "The right to freedom of expression does not imply the right to offend religious beliefs" or something of that nature. Did the pope really say that? Were that the case, the next time a priest or bishop is arrested for child molestation, the church shouldn't have to worry about being satirized on "Southpark" or in a Mad magazine.

But is that really what freedom of the press — or free speech, for that matter — is all about?

The U.S. Constitution states that congress shall not pass any law "respecting an establishment of religion" or "abridging the Freedom of Speech". Nowhere does it say that the freedom of the religion entails a right to be free from ridicule; that would contradict the free speech clause of The First Amendment.

But the constitution is designed to protect people from harm, some would say. Well, did the publishers of Jyllands-Posten actually harm anyone? Did they tie down and force Muslims to read their cartoons?

GREG JOHNSON

OG Beat writer Greg Johnson, who we first met in SF/YGC in The Beat's infancy, tackles the subject of freedom of speech this week. We know he has great insight on many topics and this week he doesn't disappoint us. As a matter of fact, not only does he state why he disagrees with a particular situation where political cartoons poked fun at the Prophet Muhammad and people were outraged, but he also gives concrete reasons why. It's writers like this that make us appreciate working here. Thank you for all you are and everything you've written. We're sure we'll here from you some time soon — or at least we hope so. For those that don't know, Greg writes to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA.

Harm only means that you are physically injuring someone. Hurting someone's feelings does not constitute harming them.

Oh, but the constitution is an American document, some would say, and we cannot expect Muslim cultures to our laws, what laws are we asking them to respect? No one was under any obligation to purchase a copy of Jyllands-Posten. If anything, the protestors are asking us to follow their religious codes by agreeing not to allow the expression of any views that might be offensive to them. They want American and European publications to be like the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Yemen keep under their thumbs and can shut down at moments notice.

George Orwell once wrote that freedom is nothing but the right "to tell people what they do not want to hear". Polite society dictates that people respect each other's views and religious beliefs, but it is not written in stone. And more importantly it is not written in the constitution.

Sometimes, people will gladly give up certain freedoms because they believe them to be improper. However, the more willing people are to give up on personal freedoms, the more freedoms will be taken away from them. Eventually they will see that they've abandoned their alienated rights without realizing it.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are too valuable to be constrained by convention.

Peace and Respect,

It's all about respecting yourself, your parents, your elders, your culture, and listening to wisdom, and applying it in your daily lives, in order to be a success in life.

OBA FRELIMO

This next writer always has great things to say, and like a few others, we instantly get excited when we see his name on the return address. This next writer was The Beat's first BWO writer, and today he is writing to us from the California Correctional Facility in Tehachapi, CA, he lets us and the readers know "what it's all about." And from reading his piece, we feel like he knows exactly what he's talking about. Not often do we stop to appreciate deep thinkers and their ideas in this world full of digital cameras and cell phones. So please if your going to take time to think, mull this next piece over and tell us if you are as amazed by this old school Beat author as we are. By the way, we first met Oba, back in the early 1990's when he was a youngsta roaming the halls of SF/YGC. What a tragic journey this old friend has been on. Thanks for thinking of us Oba!

This Is What It's All About

It's all about: being responsible for self and your actions and making no excuse or blaming others for what you do or why you do it.

It's all about: God and knowing you were created with a purpose, a mission, and a destiny to fulfill, and working towards that purpose with diligence.

It's all about: respecting yourself, your parents, your elders, your culture, and listening to wisdom, and applying it in your daily lives, in order to be a success in life.

It's all about: being legal, leaving illegal activities alone! Their all traps, temptations from the devil, and if you fall or stumble into that life, you have consequences you will face that will be drastic and life altering, maybe even life ending.

It's all about: education, strengthening your mind with knowledge to make better life decisions and pave a pathway

out of poverty and into the riches of life.

It's all about: being a leader, having the courage not to follow others who you know are doing wrong and headed in the wrong direction. Do your own thing!

It's all about: being a role model conducting yourself properly around the lil' ones who may look up to you or watch you to try and find out how they themselves should act. So be aware of what you do and set good examples of conduct!

It's all about: being yourself, finding joy in being who you are! Forget what society wants you to be, be you, do you, and know that it's perfectly alright to just be yourself.

It's all about: staying free, not coming to jail, once you get out! In order to do that, you gotta stop trying to be slick. Being slick, ain't gonna get you no where! Be "real" instead and shake coming to jail.

It's all about: respect, respecting yourself, peers, people, young men respect the ladies, young ladies respect the men! Respect can get you a long way in life. Learn to take nothing for granted, respect all life's experiences cause they ain't promised to you!

Last but not least, it's all about: love and loyalty! Keep love close to your heart, cause love cures all things and stay loyal to yourself, family and peers cause nobody wants to be around a fake, disloyal person! So stay down like you know how! One love, peace, ya'll stay strength.

XIOMARA

Whoa, reading all of these amazing poems and then having to come up with an introduction that encompasses everything this woman is — yes, it's a daunting task. From her rocky experiences as a strong Latin woman to her struggles with being away from her loved ones, Xiomara is obviously the true definition of survivor. And because of this, she will always have a place in The Beat Within's pages. Her motivation to change and do the right thing is an inspiration to us all. If everyone in the world were as compassionate as her, we'd all be smiling right now. Thank you for being everything you are, Xiomara. Please keep sending love our way... We could never fully explain how much we appreciate you and the presence of your poems. Oh, by the way, Xiomara is writing from a correctional institution in West Columbia, South Carolina.

Beat Readers

Every one of my letters and poems explain a deep chapter in my life that took me a while to overcome. But now I am strong enough to share. Some of my poems or stories are very disturbing and heart touching to any one who just an emotional person.

It hurts me to continue to relive my war scars by writing but if I can help just one person my pain has been forgotten. If you're going through any of the issues you read please remember that it will get better. Any of my writings I may have changed names for confidential reasons but it's the message, that's what needs to reach each and every one of you. Hope you enjoy...

Behind This Ski Mask

Behind this ski mask
I hide my fears
I don't let anyone
See these tears
Behind this ski mask
I frown with pain
These emotions that
I carry are driving me insane.
Behind this ski mask
I hide my scars
Of spending so many
Years behind bars.
Behind this ski mask
I hide my pain
Hoping one day
I'll take it off
And it will be
Okay.

Alone

Locked up within me
I remain alone
As I shed tears
I do it alone
Fighting to live
I'm now alone
Trusting wrong people
I find myself alone
Living on earth
I am alone
No one here for me
I feel so alone.
Life is filled of loneliness,
As I lay here alone.

Don't

Don't cut your hair
For it is not the reason
He abused you!
Don't wear baggy clothes
To hide your body
For it is not the blame
He misused you!
Don't fear attention
For it is not the reason
He hurt you!
Don't hide your beauty
For it is not the reason
He took advantage of you!
Don't hide that beautiful woman in you
For she is not the blame
He put you through pain!
Please don't hate your self
For you are not the blame
For the pain you carry today!
Dedicated to all young woman
That have been sexually abused.

The BEAT
Within



Afraid To Sleep At Night

Late at night
I fear to go to sleep
fearing he will get me
Afraid of the dark
I stay wide-awake
Hoping the sun
Will come my way
I dread the night
for it has hurt me
I should have realized
He ain't deserve me
I cry and cry
'Till I've fallin' asleep
Wake up in the morning
And I'm still me
Every night is
A battle of my life
I push and strife
'Till I break night
Other times, I fall
Asleep soon to wake
Up with fearness in me.

A Part Of Me

When he was born
He then became a part of me.
I held you in my arms
It was then you became a part of me.
Life snatched you for my love
Even then you was still a part of me.
Time flies by
But one thing I don't fail to see
Throughout it all
You'll always remain a part of me.

World Of AIDS

World of AIDS
You're in constant pain
World of AIDS
Your life slowly slips
away
World of AIDS
You began to go insane
World of AIDS
Your name is known like
fame
World of AIDS
You're no longer the
same
World of AIDS
You have chosen the right
lane
World of AIDS
Now for mistakes you'll
pay.
Dedicated to Angela
I love you.

Latin Beauty

You call me a spick
Is that because you love my hair?
You call me a spick
Is that because you love my accent?
You call me a spick
Is that because you love my skin tone?
You call me a spick
Is that because you're in love with my
curves?
You call me a spick
Is that because you love how I dance?
You call me a spick
Is that because I'm one?
No not this one!
I am a beautiful Latin woman
And love everyday of it!!!

Stand

I held you in my arms
I had nothing to say
God has taken you
First thing the next day
It was hard to see you bleed
I felt the stabbing deep with me
Time was running out
I did not know what this was about
Your words turned into mumbles
As you spoke
Your tongue began to stumble
You were never there for me
But Lord knows
You was good to me.
I love you
Was the last words I said
Before God to you
And left me to stay
Your lifeless body
Remained in my hands
Your memory is what
Gives me the strength
To stand.

You Don't Know Me

Like a stabbing
To my soul I'm slowly dying
No one can imagine
The pain and agony I carry
Shed tear for tear
Until an ocean begins to
Form.
Alone within me and even
More alone outside of me.
What do you know about me?
How can you judge me?
You don't know me!
Like a stabbing to my heart
Life slowly slips by.
You can't imagine
Suffering and sorrow I carry
Soundless screams I begin to
Get weak
Alone within me and even more
Outside of me.
What do you know about me?
How can you judge me?
You don't know me.

An Addict In Me

Life surrounds you
You are my friend
I depend on you
I look up to you
When you're in me
My fears are chased away
As my mind slowly drips away
I'm addicted to you
You make me feel free
Your company allows me to be me.
You are my world
Without you there's no me!
P.C.P will you marry me?
Life is so much better with you
Because without you
There's no sense in living
I hope you understand the seriousness in me
You're truly who I want with me.
I hope you write back and accept me for me
Sincerely yours,
Truly, the addict in me.

XIOMARA (CONT.)

He Found Me Alone

Music thumping
Thugs chunking
Alone I move,
Move to the tune
Move to the beat
Up and down the pole 160
There he is
There he goes
A quick stare
Became endless eye contact
Money flying in the air
Love has set with just
One good glare
His desire for me
Grew bigger in his eyes
His lust for me burned
Within him

He found me alone,
Alone on the stage
Just me and the pole
Just me and the music
The bass is jumping
Drinks is pumping
Opened my legs
Gave him a peek
Wondering is this
What he seeks.
He found me alone
Just me and my body
Me and my moves
Me and my loot
The night is now
Over everyone
Has left
And he found me
Alone. Just me
And the stage
And my life.

Hundreds Of Voices

Water breaks
How much pain can I take?
Hundreds of voices I hear
I can't seem to think clear
What's happening?
What's going on?
The sounds of his cries
The look in his eyes
I could not let him go
We both must go
Leave this earth
Leave this pain
Leave the hurt

Lights went dim everything
went blurry
I daze off with him in my arms
Shackled to the bed
I begin to awake
Where is he?
Where's my baby?
Hundreds of voices I hear
I can't seem to think clear
What's happening?
What's going on?
I must go
I must leave this earth
Leave this agony
Leave this sorrow!

Lights went dim everything went blurry
I daze off with him in my arms
Shackled to the bed
I begin to awake

A Simple Wish I Just Can't Grant

Your birthday is coming
'Your wish' for me to be with you
I'm sorry mother
But that is a simple wish
I just can't grant
Wrapped up in the system
So easy to get in
So hard to get out
Your birthday is coming
'Your wish' for me to be free
I'm sorry mother
But that is a simple wish
I just can't grant.
I did not think of you
When I did the crime
Now I cry for you
While I do the time.
Your birthday is coming soon
'Your wish' for me to change
I'm glad you ask for that mother
That's a wish I can grant!

XIOMARA (CONT.)

He Is There

Just when you can't hold on any longer
Believe in Him
He is there
Just when you think no one loves you
Believe in Him
He is there.
Just when you have run out of faith
Believe in Him
He is there
Just when you feel your about to lose it
Believe in him
He is there
Just when the world has turned on you
Believe in him
He is there
And when you feel you're alone
You're not
Because he is there.

And There She Was

Three years of loneliness within me.
I come to new hope
And that is to work on me.
Days turn into weeks
And my heart is beginning to get weak.
No longer cold, no longer bold.
It was her who fought her way
Into my heart into my soul
And there she was
The one I so long looked for
God has opened the door to let her in,
But the same way she walked in
She walked out.
Leaving me alone in the cold,
There she was
Now she's gone.
Dedicated to you!

A Part For Everyday

I shed a tear for everyday
Monday I shed a tear
I feel alone and worthless
Tuesday I shed a tear
I'm wrapped in pain and sorrow
Wednesday I shed a tear
I'm just not beautiful enough
Thursday I shed a tear
I'm hatin' life
Friday I shed a tear
I'm living agony and fear
Saturday I shed a tear
I cry and no one hears
Sunday I shed a tear
But I'm okay because the Lord is here!

What's The Use?

What's the use
In love
If all it does is hurt you?
What's the use
Of trying if you always fail?
What's the use in dreaming
If it never comes true?
What's the use competing
If you always lose?
What's the use of looking
If you never find?
What's the use in advice
If no one listens?
What's the use of colors
If you blind to see?
What's the use of living
If all you do is wish you was dead.

if you spend 10 years in the hole,
you tend to think a lot! I realized
a few things. Here's just a few.
No matter what, we always have
a choice, choose well

THEE MOUSEMAN

For those of you who need some guidance in your life, we suggest you make Thee Mouseman a consistent author you read. For not only has he been through more than most of us could even imagine. But he's also compassionate enough to share his experiences with us so we can learn from them. And whether you're sitting in juvenile hall awaiting trial or pulling your last little stretch before you go home, we guarantee you'll feel what this O.G. is saying. He writes to us from Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, CA. Keep teaching these youngsters and we'll keep on publishing your pieces.

Dearer

Dearer to me than me are my mistakes. Each mistake is an "absolutely perfect" example of what I don't want to happen again, I'm sure of that.

A lot of people say each of us is totally responsible for our own mistakes. Still I cannot ignore the people who followed my mistakes, because they looked up to me, cause they thought "it what the right thing to do." I showed them wrong and called it right, I helped them screw their lives up.

When I was a young pup in prison, no one ever said, "Mouseman slow down, stop and think about life!" Not one soul. I remember the first time I went to the hole; it was for fighting, got ten days in the hole. Next time was thirty, I think? All my dukes, partners and friends where there when I got out, you know, the usual props, Good fight bro, you put it on him, that's right represent, show him who's a punk!"

Last thirty days in the hole, I got jumped up, he got jumped up, we both went right back to our same cells! Alright, so what did I change? He's here, I'm here. Oh yeah thirty days in the hole. That's stupid! Ouch, did I say that!! (I was accused—I'm innocent)

Hold up, bump it down! This gets better. A short time later, I find myself facing three years in the hole for a killing! That's 995 days, (where's my dukes, partners, and friends?) three years in the hole — that's stupid too! (I was accused

— I'm innocent)

Hold up, bump it down! Yeah you guessed it, it gets deeper. I did manage to take that three years (995 days), and turn it to three thousand, five hundred and fifty two days in the hole, that's just shy of ten years in the hole! Dukes, partners, and friends, where you at? Why not give me a gun so I can shoot myself in the foot? It will go well with this stupid look on my face!

Okay, if you spend 10 years in the hole, you tend to think a lot! I realized a few things. Here's just a few. No matter what, we always have a choice, choose well. Second, true, I mean "true", dukes, homies, rads, we keep our friends out of trouble. Why you want to help me do something that's gonna make me cry? Don't dis mines, I wouldn't yours. My dogs would never cheer on stupidity, we aren't about that! So that brings me back to my mistakes, I'm 45 years old still in prison, ain't no kid no more. When you screw up, that's yours! It belongs to you, there's only one way to be cool with your mistakes. You have to learn from them. That's not hard. We only stick our hands in fire one time. We learn quickly when we need to.

Now I play my life like a chess game. I think way ahead and stay out of the way of danger, see it coming. I learned where not to go, what is worth my time what is not. Most important, I make time to tell people about my mistakes, so they don't do the same. If my count is right, I gave up 10,220 days of my life, I didn't lose them, I did not get them taken away from me, no no! I gave them away, that's stupid!

Can it happen to you? You better believe it! I've never been to a foster or group home, camp, YA, family counseling, or done county jail time. None of that!! Straight to the pen, joint, big house, up the river, the dink or abyss, whatever you want to call it, I was 16 sentenced to a life term. That was stupid! Any questions? Shoot (watch your feet)

Outline For Success

People say it's good to plan. That we must have goals. Short term, long term, goals, goals, goals!

I've had goals and I've got goals. Plans? Sure I got plans. I got more plans than an interior designer. I got a plan for this and I got a plan for that. Plans, plans, plans!

I sit down and write this because I feel it's imperative. It's kinda funny. I've been planning to write my plans since I planned to plan my plans.

I feel it's imperative for a couple of reasons. First being that my plans, per se, my thoughts, worries, anxiety, and all the other feelings that come with paroling are all mixed up. And I've learned (thanks to God) that I can articulate my thoughts better when I unite ink with paper. And I've also learned that when I lay it down I can see the "Deeper" meaning of things.

I once told The Beat that most of my prose just come; they flow easy like pure mountain water cascading through carved mountains. Being guided and pulled by gravity.

I don't have to sit and think, I just sit and write. It's like my subconscious just does the writing, the words, the meanings, being pulled by truth. And my passion... is the pursuit... of truth. And that's why I think it's imperative that I sit down and write, because I need to pull out the truth. Whether I like it or not. So I can deal with it!

Another Reason I feel I need to do this is because I need to compare what I think my plans should be and what goals I should have with what I've learned about the Bible.

You see, I'm torn, maybe like any other "Carnal Christian" between my faith, and preconceived secular beliefs. It's been so hard for me just to let it all go, to leave it all to God. But that's what I feel I should do, what I need to do, what I must do! So I write to see if it's at all possible to find a balance, or to see, just to see, inside me.

I've got (God willing) four weeks until I get released into society. I don't know if I'm numb, dumb, institutionalized, traumatized or a combination. But for a guy who has burned all his bridges, has no job, no residence, no clothes, no family support, I find myself peculiarly calm. I would like to think it's because of my faith, because I believe that the Lord will make the crooked paths straight, that he will provide. But I'm terrified. Terrified to think that I've turned cold, that I don't care! (God Save Me) I think maybe, just maybe I'm numb because if I was to really look close, really think about the obstacles ahead, the enormous task before me, the opposition, I might crumble. I don't know, can anyone out there hear me, can someone advise me, help me, lead me, I'm open for all and any suggestions?

I know some reading this might say, "How dare you?! Yeah, you got 99 problems but LWO ain't one!"

And, sho', you right. And that could be a contributing factor, knowing that yes, I got problems, yes, it's going to be hard. But thank God at least I get a chance, and thank God Life is good! And in the bigger scheme of things it isn't that bad. For all the problems I have are self-inflicted. Therefore meaning I also got the power to fix them, or do I? But that's when I get into my spiritual tug of war. Spirit on one side, flesh on the other.

(Let me segue quickly; there are two dogs constantly warring against each other inside us. Same age, size, and breed. Question: Who wins? Answer: Whoever you feed the most!)

I think to myself, all the plans, goals I've had have never succeeded. And I've come to the point, that hey, maybe I can't do it. Yeah, my spirit is willing but my flesh is weak!

And I'm reminded of a verse: "Consider what God has

FRANK RAMOS

Once again, the deeply spiritual Frank Ramos, now known as Solomon, prepares to leave prison, this time fortified with a plan for success — and a realistic recognition of the personal demons he must conquer to succeed. While the underlying foundation of Solomon's plan is his faith in God and the wisdom he takes from the Bible, his plan goes much deeper than merely "trust in God and hope for the best." No, this young man has thought very carefully about the steps he must follow, and the attitude he must strive to maintain, in order not to fall back to old habits that repeatedly dampen his spirit and darken the light that shines from within him. No one can predict anyone's future, but we are still ready to say that with a hard-hitting plan for success and an acknowledgment of his own frailties and weaknesses, he has vastly improved his chances to stay alcohol and drug free, and to walk forward responsibly in freedom. By the time this is published, Frank Ramos will no longer be writing us from the California State Prison in Lancaster. We will await word of his next address, and of his new life.

done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?" (ECC: 7:13)

They tell me I need a plan, I need goals. And what comes naturally without contemplating, the simple yet complex solution, God. The Lord of Lords, Jesus. As I sit here and ask myself, "Frank, what are your plans, goals, what's the outline buddy?" and I quickly come with one sentence: "But seek ye 'first' the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be unto you." (Matthew 7:33)

because I realize all my prior plans haven't worked out so well. And like previously stated "failures no longer an option." My "vida" is at stake! It says in the scriptures: "Many are the plans in a man's heart but it is the Lord who directs his steps." So allow me to share the plans in my heart.:

First and foremost, I must stay sober, refraining from every substance, including "drank" chron bomb, on to the graduating class of narcotics.

Put my daughter #1, her needs, being a selfless man, responsible! (I love you Vida)

Holding down employment (putting all my focus into what I'm doing at the time), taking pride in any lowly position, knowing I'm building on a foundation.

Educate Myself, (Must balance current income with building and preparing for my future.)

I must have it in my mind that it will be hard, I will have to work hard. But I must always take it in stride. Knowing that I might not immediately see the fruits of my labor but knowing when I do reap the harvest, how sweet it will be. (Karina)

And I must always do it legal. 100% legal. From car insurance to filing taxes. (Not giving power to whom DOESN'T DESERVE IT!)

I must always remember; I have choices and it's all about the choices I make! (I will have adversity.; it's how I handle it.)

The Beat, thank you for allowing me a platform to express my soul. Now I believe I'm so calm, because I am confident, because I know I'm somebody. And that I'm finally going to shed the cloak that's been hindering me from shining. But this confidence, my beliefs, are not in ME. I put my trust in no man.

My trust,
my faith,
my worries,
my anxiety,
are His.

I'm not a gambling man, but if I was to make a bet, I'd wager my soul, He'll make a man out of me yet.

Humble, grateful,
Solomon

PROFESSOR BLACKMIND

We can't really express how excited we are to have Professor Blackmind back in these pages. Although he gives a pretty comprehensive history of his relationship to The Beat, we can add things that he's too modest to tell you — he's one of the most gifted poets and writers we've had the great privilege of knowing over the years, and has probably brought more young people to The Beat than anyone outside of staff. We hope you will get a taste (if nothing more) of his great gifts by reading the following. His poem, "Listen" reminds us of the similarities between the bloody violence in Iraq and the bloody violence in our streets — and we could pose the identical questions about the war at home that he poses about the war in Iraq. When he writes that even a foolish man can teach (and a wise one can be fooled), he is saying something profound — and profoundly ignored by far too many people who think of themselves as wise. Welcome back, Blackmind. Keep writing, and we hope to see you when you get out of the Sacramento County Jail.

Re-Introduction

If you do not know who I am, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lawrence G. Smith, by my friends and family at The Beat Within address me by my moniker, Professor Blackmind. I am writing the BWO from a solitary confinement cell at Sacramento County Jail (RCCC) in Elk Grove, CA.

I have been a BWO writer and Beat artist for nearly four years, and I am very, very grateful for the relationship we have developed over the years. The Beat has given me the honor of having over fifty of me and my friend's pieces published in this wonderful magazine when other publications wouldn't give us a chance. The Beat is the truth; they provide proof.

Let's flash back to 2002. I was a 16-year-old resident at the boot camp-like Pacific Lodge Boys Home in Los Angeles. I was sent there from Sacramento County Juvenile Hall to do two years. I had done many years off and on between the Hall and the Boys' Ranch. They were getting tired of my little crimes (assault, burglary, grand theft, etc.) so they sent me away to "teach me a lesson." To make a long story short, I learned about the Beat, and I showcased my work like an audition. I made the part and became a regular BWO contributor. I also read and studied the many heartfelt pieces composed by BEAT LEGENDS like E-Money, D'Wayne the Knowledge, Jason Tréas, and Wardog.

I became fascinated by the minds and talents of those who made The Beat what it is today. We were all condemned by society, but The Beat gave us a voice. There are some very wonderful people working at The Beat, and they really love their jobs and they don't get paid much to do it. Once I became a regular at The Beat, my peers at the Boys' Home began to

notice the package I received weekly, and asked about the black and white magazine that was in it. I told them about The Beat, and many of them wanted to send some pieces. I began collecting their individual pieces and sent them to The Beat along with my own. We were published and introduced to BWO as POETIC MINDZ.

We wrote many things and tried to maintain a positive message within each piece. The Beat became more than our voice, our outlet. The Beat became our family and our community. We felt safe with The Beat. POETIC MINDSZ was our name and The Beat was our aim. But unfortunately, with every good thing comes someone who wants to destroy that thing and make things miserable. Eventually, one of the staffers at the Boys' Home found out about The Beat and told her supervisor that were writing and receiving it in the mail. The staffer also informed her that I started a "gang" called POETIC MINDZ, and that we were meeting once a week and writing inappropriate material to send to this horrible jailhouse magazine.

The Supervisor was outraged. I was brought to her office immediately and she gave me reasons why The Beat was not allowed. She confiscated all of my Beats and told me that I would be punished if I continued to send pieces as Professor Blackmind and with my group, POETIC MINDZ. The editors of The Beat were sympathetic with my situation, and supported me in my decision to go against the supervisor's unfair and unnecessary ban against The Beat. POETIC MINDZ and I continued to write and read The Beat secretly. The ban gave us ammunition to shoot some of our best work to be published in the best weekly publication.

I remember getting caught by the supervisor with "contraband" Beats and being punished, as if I got caught with porn or some other lewd and lascivious publication. I became very unhappy with being at The Boys' Home and instead of running away, I put everything aside and rebelled. I wanted out of that place, so I did everything I could to make that happen.

I was eventually terminated and sent back to juvenile hall, where I stayed until was 18. I am now 20, and it's sad to say that I am still in the system and going through the same things as an adult. I am proud of my accomplishments at The Beat, and if I had to do it all again, I wouldn't change a thing. I haven't said much in this "Re-Intro," but I hope you all have a small idea about who I am and what role I play. I am Professor Blackmind of POETIC MINDZ, and I'm still back!



Listen

Listen to the world
Look what's around you
Can you see people dying
Read the newspaper
Do you see your friends dying
Look at the obituaries
Who died today
Read about the war
How many soldiers died today
How many more have to die
Before we bring them home
How many families have to suffer
How many moms have to cry
Before we end this thing
How many votes does it take to impeach the president
Before he destroys the world as we know it
Is Bush the Anti-Christ
Will he kill us all in the next three years
When do we speak up
When will they listen
Or do they even care
Listen to the world

PROFESSOR BLACKMIND (CONT.)

Teach

Understand my speak, do I make some sense
You can learn the truth at my expense
Even a foolish man can teach the world
And a wise man can be fooled
But I am not here to use you
I will never try to abuse you
I don't mean to preach
But I'm just here to teach
I reside in this jail cell
Stressin', goin' through hell
I committed minor crimes
Which led to major time
Should've listened when Mama preached
Or paid attention when the instructor reached
But I kept it in the streets
Runnin' game, tryin' to eat
Sacramento, the state's capital
Where I grinded to maintain capital
Where I stole from those who worked
Where I chose to put in work
Where I caught my first case
And received a slap in the face
I should've listened when Mama preached
Or paid attention when the instructor taught...

That's My Word

This is just a reflective piece that I wrote to get some things off of my chest. Initially, I had planned to make this a Q&A, but I chose instead to discuss a couple of topics that are important to me. It's been a very long time since I've written The Beat, so please bear with me and hear me out.

Lately, I've started the habit of reading the newspaper every day. I try to stay up on what's happening in the world. The government gets caught spying, the Vice-President shoots a friend. Bush doesn't know when to bring the troops home, etc. There's so much going on its crazy. Now that we murdered Tookie, what's next for the Terminator? Are we going to re-elect him? I hope not. What is the current State of the State? Where will California be in the next four years?

What will we do to make Sacramento and the Bay Area a safe place to live in. What will Lou Blanas do to bring down the murder rate? At least 10 people have been shot or stabbed to death in Sacramento in the last two weeks. Two of them were people I knew and befriended. If the Sacramento County sheriffs spent as much energy as they do when they're beating us up in the jail and put it into preventing and solving murders, a lot of good people would still be alive and a lot of families wouldn't have to suffer. That's my word.

ANGELIQUE

Well, our old friend Angelique is back ! Once upon a time this young lady was gracing the pages of The Beat Within with her powerful and thoughtful words and now she is gracing the pages of The Beat Without. Welcome back Angelique! Angelique writes to us from Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (CYA) serving a two-year sentence. She was once (and still is) a powerful writer from our workshops at Santa Clara Juvenile hall and she has just got back in touch with us through mail. We hope to hear more from Angelique down the road.

On My Mente

As I lie here in my cell thinking to myself why I went this route. I thought it was firme to gangbang, smoke dope, cheat, lie, steal. And do what I wanted to do. I couldn't see all that I was doing to myself.

I thought just because mom's in Chowchilla and dad's in San Quentin that's how it's suppose to go down. Ride for our people is what the homeboy said, but now I see clearly what grandma meant.

It hurts me dearly to know I have four brothers and three sisters out there that need me desperately.

I'm only 17 years. old and been through so so much. I've been hurting for years and still am. They say you learn from your mistakes; well they're right. I've learned a lot. I'm struggling each and everyday, though with the fear of not succeeding once again.

First Love

I remember the first day I saw your face.
Not my type in anyway,
Never knew you'd be the one to make my flower bloom.
The one to make me feel so wonderful as never before.
You made me want to love you more and more.
I remember the first day,
you said you loved me.
But like they day, there's a thin line between love and hate.
I thought being with you was my fate.
Couldn't see all that was in store for me.
I remember the first day,
We had to go our own ways.
In our cells at night we lay.
You told me everything would be okay.
But you lied and went your own separate way.
I remember the first day
A bird carried a message to my face
"She" left me in a shocked space
She told me you had said your vows
All I could do was sit and ask all the why's? And how's?
I remember the first time,
we met like yesterday.
And 'till I die I'll never be the same.
"I still love you Samuel."

**Even a foolish man
can teach the world
And a wise man can
be fooled**

Introduce

Que Pasa, it's that homegirl Lonely as ever. Well, before I begin I would like to say hello to David and Dennis and thank them for going to Santa Clara Juvenile Hall to provide The Beat program. Well, for you Beat readers and writers who don't know me, my name is Angelique G. I'm 17 and now a inmate in YA for two years. I stay in San Jose and I'll be out in September 2007. So wish me luck and hope you all like my pieces.

ADNAN KHAN

We made a classic mistake as usual, we lost the next writer's address, but we think if he is still in Contra Costa County Jail he can be found. With that said, we welcome Adnan Khan aka Thai Pakki Prince. This writer is no joke, as he spits his words with the hope that one of you readers hears him out and makes a change for the better. We need to thank our old friend Viet Nguyen, who we met back in B5 SF/YGC back in the early days of The Beat, for turning Adnan onto The Beat Within. Now take notes young readers, as Adnan tells it as he sees it, no joke, it's ugly!

Murder Is The Case That They Gave Me

Everybody wants to be labeled a gangsta; branded a thug. Nowadays you must be a "killa" to earn respect. Growing up, all my surrounding peers shared that same notion. As I sit here at my desk, enclosed inside this box that I'm issued from this county, I realize the consequences of my ignorance.

I was 18 years of age when I was indicted with this murder case. I also have a 2-11 robbery enhancement. If I go to trial and lose, I'm getting whacked with the death penalty or life without the possibility of parole, if I get lucky.

Myriad amount of individuals are oblivious of criminal law. Maybe if everybody ascertained the law and its consequences, some possibly would not be incarcerated. Maybe that's just my irrational excuse? However, I feel that's on the system to ponder.

The reason I express the aforementioned feelings is because I was completely absentminded about the felony-murder and special circumstances rule. That rule states that because of a felony (i.e. robbery, burglary, arson, rape, carjacking, ect.) someone died or got killed, everybody involved in the felony is guilty of the murder, whether they committed the murder or not.

For example, say you and two of your "potnahs" decide to burglarize a house. You're pretty sure no one is home and decide to break in. You and another crimee begin taking things from downstairs while the third perp decides to search upstairs. All of the sudden you hear gunshots go off upstairs, and in a panic you leave the house. And the next thing you know, all three of you guys get arrested because your "patnah" upstairs ended up killing someone. All three of you are getting charged with the murder your boy committed whether it was purposely or accidental.

Or lets say the guy upstairs kills your friend. Both you and your other friend are guilty of your dead patnah's murder. Why? Why not? The law states that if you never intended to do the burglary, then no one would have been compelled to be killed.

Now almost every inmate who is charged with murder will tell you passionately that they are innocent. That may be true, or may not be true. Honestly, I really don't care. Me, personally, I did not commit this murder. The D.A. even knows that. Let me say that again. The D.A. even knows that! However that crucial information is irrelevant. I've been repressed since March of 2003 and may never be a civilian in the world outside these walls again.

To elaborate more about me, I'm an American born Pakistani. Born and raised by the streets of the bay. I have the stereotypical big nose and shadowed eyes. I'm an ugly dude but ironically, them females think I'm a cutie.

My position in jail is funny. I mean how many Pakistani's do you know locked up for a murder except for a terrorist? A lot of individuals lack awareness about the way I get perceived in here. Many deputies here are patriotic. They're military reserves who have most likely been to Afghanistan or Iraq so they may acquire ill feelings towards me since they've killed "my kind" our Muslim Jumah services get hated on. On the contrary, Bible study runs smoothly. They act like I had say so in the 9/11 attacks. I'm in a neutral position. I don't appreciate what's happening here or there in the Middle East. Fortunately, and unfortunately, institutionalism taught me to man up and not trip off mild situations like this one. There's an endless list of complaints I can convey to you. But I leave all my complaints for my raps. (Stay tuned in to me to

get a glimpse of my lyrics.)

There's not a day that goes by where I think of my life and the mistakes I've made. I might be locked in a box for the rest of my life. I got things to do, people to see and girls to... uh... entertain?! I miss so many things out there that I would not even trip over on the streets. Like, I haven't tasted a tomato in almost two years. I miss tomatoes! Funny thing is, I don't even like tomatoes and I miss them. I miss my family, my baby cousins, my fits, my ugly bucket I was driving, and of course my girl, Mary Jane. I need her. I need her real bad. It's because I'd diagnosed with... ahem... "chronic anxiety".

On a real serious tip though, it's scary than a mug in here. I'm not talking about being scared of a person. I'm speaking on being scared of the ridiculous amount of time inmates are getting. In this county (Contra Costa), there's a 98% conviction rate. That's crazier than mental institution. What hurts is that you get to know these people and they end up getting hopeless amount of time. Jorge, 25 to life; Swindle, 125 years with the kickstand (the L); Big Mike, 40 with the L; Puff, convicted of a double homicide- faces death penalty of life with out parole. That's just to name a few who lost in trial. The list goes on. Then there's people taking plea bargains (deals) that seem outrageous to me. Young Pete took 15 years, Smiley accepted 18 years, Tone plead guilty to 23 years, Denzill compelled to take 30 years in order to avoid the death penalty. He will be almost 60 when he gets out. It's crazy man. I'm in a very similar position and I could be next, the next person to go out into oblivion and be forgotten from society until Judgment Day.

But why shed tears? Spare your sympathy. I don't want a single soul to sob my tale. I just wanted to give a message to these youngsters and let them know this is some real shhh.

In here I don't do my time, I use my time. So when and I if I get out, I'll be prepared to be a multi-millionaire, feel me? There's not a tear that slid down my cheek which time did not dry. God assured us when He said with every difficulty there's relief. I'm destined to get my shine on, believe that.

As for me, I try to maintain with my chin up and keep a cool head. But all in all, I screwed up my life and it hurts

PLAYBOY

Introducing a new writer is always fun, because we never can predict how he or she will be accepted by the rest of us — whether this writer is just a one hit wonder, or a full fledged Beat author. Only time will tell, but hopefully you'll want to hear more from Playboy like we do. He's writing from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. And don't worry about it being the best, we can tell you have great potential and would love to hear more from you when your time allows. Welcome!

When Dreams Come True

Last night while you were sleeping
Yes my love, I was there
I kissed your lips, kissed your eyes
And gently caressed your hair

Your skin looked so soft and sweet to me
Just like the freshness of the morning dew
So I pulled your covers back
And climbed in next to you

But the time had went to fast and
As the sun started to rise
I quickly got up and ran for the door
Just before you open your eyes

So tonight before you go to bed
And drift so far beyond the distant stars
Remember my love is always there with you
Even though I'm behind these bars...

From Playboy to the Beat Within. It's not the best but it's from the heart of a young man who has truly spent all my life on the inside looking out. I hope it will help someone use it in any way you need too...

Yours truly,
A new friend!

The Past

No more words of hurt
No more words of hatred
Words of peace
And intelligence
That shall be sacred
I want to be on my high
And so I shall not lie
No more of my bottoms
That will cause me more problems
The past is in the past
Time to move on
Which I will do very fast
I have made many faults
I do apologize to the ones I've hurt
I do promise there will be "no more" bursts
The future has come. And take me away
To be clean and free
And to take all the good advice.

Jail

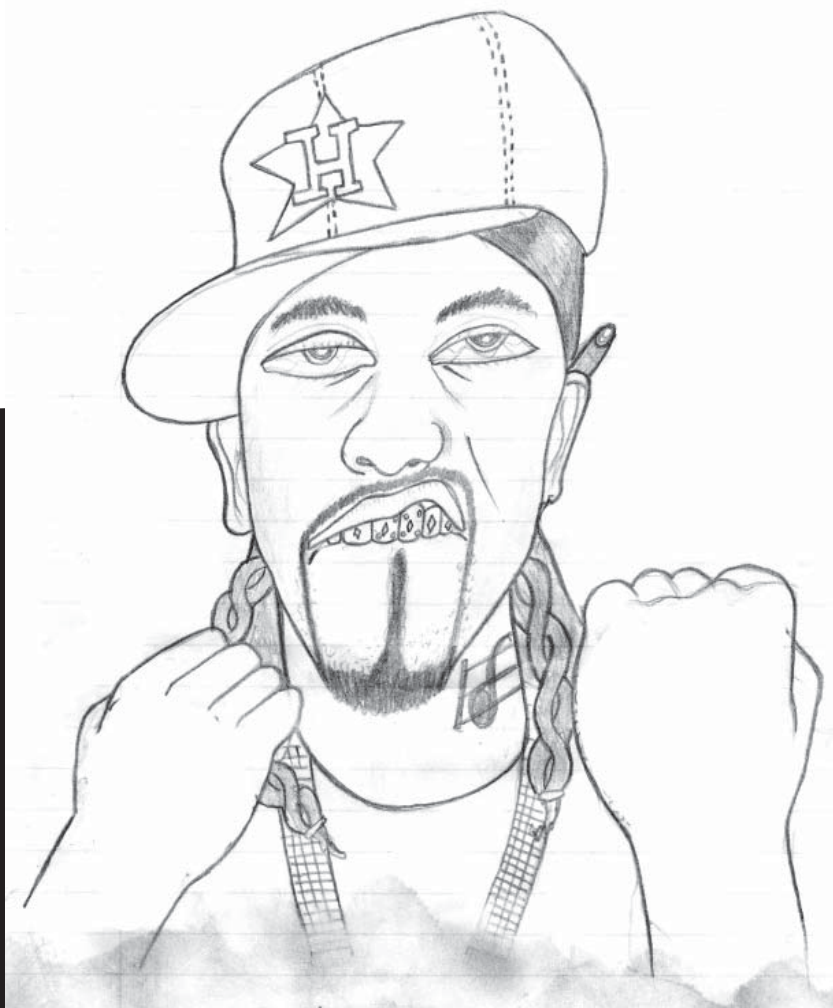
Jail
You cannot smoke
Or toke
Trust
It's no joke
Jail
The best thing to me
Is when I get some mail
Days I cry
Others I sigh
Missing my family
That cannot come nowhere near me
Loss of visits
No more of those precious 60 minutes
Jail
It's making me frail
Also when you turn around
There's always that next tale
Jail
Times I feel
I'm getting beat down with hail
No respect towards me
Some CO's they start to bore me
With them always coming towards me
With their non-sobriety!
Jail
Getting caught up in the system
To me was a blessing
It had fixed me
Hopefully that I can see
It sure did make the best of me
My thinking is clearer
Making me not want to get nearer
To that bad ass drug dealer
Need the change in my life
Old life will be far out of sight
Jail
Trust me
Trust me indeed
I have learned my lesson
And counted my blessings
The nightmares almost over
For now on I will stay sober
Jail
No more jail
This is not no tale
This shhh is fa' real!

DINA MARIA DE TILLIO

We're sure that everyone in Dina's situation would ask the same questions, so we aren't surprised by her wonderfully empathetic heart. As she writes way from the other side of the country in The Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, CT, we're overcome with sadness at the thought of what she must be experiencing being locked up with a child on the outside. Hopefully, some of you can feel her pain — we assume that you will...

Questions I Ask

To my sister Antonia
Is she thinking of me?
Does she sleep at night?
Is she still using her blankie?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What kind of new foods is she eating?
What new words is she learning?
Is she still going on the potty?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What new cartoons is she into?
Who does she play with?
Is she ok?
How are you punishing her?
I hope it's the time out way
And not the spanking way.
Why haven't you let her write to me?
You know what I mean,
By drawing pictures for her mommy!
Antonia, I don't think you realize how hard it is
For me being a mommy
Not being able to see
The one and only thing
That matters to me
Which is my beautiful baby!



TERRY LYTLE

We welcome back the heartfelt poetry from our new friend, Terry Lytle, who was first introduced to The Beat Within pages in issue 11.03. This go round he comes back full of heat with the following two poems and these poems are no joke as you will soon see. We do hope to hear from Terry real soon. We're not sure how Terry stumbled upon The Beat Within, but boy oh boy are we glad he did. Terry Lytle writes to us all from the Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, North Carolina.

The fam can't handle another fall They tired of me playin' Courthouse basketball

Bloods and Crips

Bloods and Crips what are we dying for
The way we makin' babies in the hood
We makin' more
And for

the only legacy we got to give, the streets
Come hell or high water, I'm gonna try and save my peeps
I got two nephews, wondering
If uncle T's, beat another bid
From runnin' the streets with a "gat"
Now, three strikes I got
And not even at bat
Was too damn proud, to take my flag from under my hat
I sported it, stat
Keeping a pistol under my pants
And now I'm in prison
Facin' my last chance so I'ma try and do this, ASAP

Upon release, when freedom bells ring
And the front gate opens, to take me back
I'm gonna do what it takes to guide my lil' two mans, and stack
Legit
'Cause this "job", I quit!
Upon release, as I'm on that long ride home
I'm gonna meditate, so I can focus on the man, I am
And give thanks to God
Forgiving me back, to my fam'

The system got 'em thinking
I'm down for the count
Like the last run
Was the knock-out round
In my life bout
But, I'm rebuilt
And stout
With or without homies
I still got clout
So let's talk, about...
Penitentiary rhymes
From penitentiary times
Spent half my life, living
About these lines that I write
Getting tight
Fighting the light
Hittin' any brain on sight
Man, I played mote women than cards
Even from behind bars
Now... I've got none
Just these bars
And scars

Upon release, as I walk back to life
I'm gonna do what I can, for the fam'
To do anything less, would make me
Lesser of a man
No more rubber bands
I wanna rep for the fans
I'm tired of the sands (of time)
Upon release, when the euphoria sets in
I'm gonna praise Allah
And seek guidance
Away
From men and the Jinn
Its time to win
Before life ends
I gotta do what it takes to help my peers mend

Yo Beat!

Here's two more for you. These originals, I have copies! I just ask that if you print anything, please send me the issue like yo udid with 11.03. I a mkeepign them for my daughter, when she gets older. Anyway, I've been moved to another prison.

I got a question for you readers, I want to get certified as a drug counselor when I get out, and work with youth. I don't plan on staying in North Carolina, but it's up to the Most High. Well, do you know how to go about getting certified as a drug counselor?

Peace.

And not bend
To the streets
Even if it takes
Standin' on my own two feet
Alone
I got to do what it takes
To stay home

Its late, and the lights, are now out
My cell is dark
Kinda like my heart
But there's just enough light
To finish a rhyme I start
As I adjust my sight
To keep scribin'
I wanna fulfill my vision
I'm tired of livin' a schism
Robbin' and stealin'
Drug dealin'
And killing
Being the neighborhood villain
I been gangsta
Still, hood
But homies ain't doin' the bids, I stood
Not sure they would
'Cause I been standin' up
Every chance I could
What's good
And to my hood:

Don't front
You got to stunt
While I was losing years
Facin' fears
Shedding tears
This life, is tearing my world apart
Truth told
Got me wishin', I didn't even start
Black heart, what's left
This addict of meth
Chasing death
But lonely man, married dad
Sad times, reliving
The times we had—my bad
I got on the emotions
This is life
Not boastin
Or east, or west coastin

'Cause...
When I'm released
God willing I'm gonna hesitate
Try and avoid, another case
Because if I'm gonna stand tall
I might as well, not even call
The fam can't handle another fall
They tired of me playin'
Courthouse basketball
As I reconsider, this life of strife
Half grown daughter, barely known wife
And this installment plan
Sentence of life
I pray I stay focused
I won't come back
I'm takin the the first step:
I lay down my gat! Peace

Practicing Integrity

Practicing integrity
Planting seeds of prosperity
Expecting only Allah's mercy, in return
Keeping motives in check
It's guidance, hinders the pits burn
My life's takin' a turn
Through enlightenment, I learn

With the Qurans healing
I seek my path a living example of peace
To become pious, is all I need
Humbled, indeed
Thankful for "Maya," my seed

Can't change the past, only able to focus, and regroup
Hoping Allah has ended
Satan's hindrance
Hearts being mended
Praise and thanks—to paradise, I send it

Up above me, and all around
Even under me
When I'm stumbling, and fallen to the ground
But without a sound
'Cause I'm still bound
To reach the mound, of the mountain of life
Without strife, re-united with the wife
In his plan
We were put together, before I ever realized,

TERRY LYTLE (CONT.)

I was already a man

Now I stand
firm
For the yearn and desire
To allow the guidance, to keep me clear of the fire
The forgiving, the merciful
Allah, the supreme
He's taken more vices, and bad habits
Than I've ever seen, than I'm even aware
He is the seer, he is aware
He knows and sees
All that we do
If you're not listening
The victim becomes you

It's still free choice
The still, small voice
Can only speak
It's your duty to hear
Trust, and believe that you receive
Deliverance, from fear, comfort, instead of tears
No longer
Worries
About the years either, won or loss
To be guided
Is to not be lost

I am an ex-gang member, ex-drug user, and experienced much of a life of crime — and life behind these prison walls.

JIMMY TEAL

Introducing himself to The Beat, first-time contributor Jimmy Teal, looks forward to a release date just two months away with new insights into himself and a determination to put his illegal ways and prison days behind him. He also asks The Beat for advice about how he can put his experience to use as a youth counselor to help young people move away from the life that has meant 16 years of prison for him. And while we have no specific advice for him, we hope some of our reader/writers will. Jimmy Teal wrote this inaugural piece from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, but has since moved to High Desert State Prison in Susanville.

If you're not listening
The victim becomes you

A Discovery Within

Today I've made a discovery within myself
that things are not always easy
Whether it be feeling sad, depressed, worthless or hurt,
life continues to go on as the world turns...
In this discovery I choose to let these feelings strengthen me

by accepting it to flow through my heart,
filtering them with love
and recognition that painful feelings will soon come to pass
like a storm that is replaced with sunshine and blue skies,
just an example to mention...

Life is wonderful and obstacles are welcomed
to keep me in mental and physical shape
in order to face all life's problems with a smile on my face
knowing that God's love is upon me keeping me safe....

An Introduction

Hello, my name is Jimmy Teal, and I want to personally thank you for sending me a copy of one of your publications. I know that it's not one of your recent ones, but still, I am very thankful.

It's wonderful to have the privilege to read so many raw and real feelings as well as thoughts of our youth in these times that we are in. I myself have been through so much in life, and honestly, I feel that I could offer a lot of positive encouragement to deter some of our youth from a negative lifestyle from a counselor's point of view, and/or mentor.

I have been in and out of prison from the age 18 to 34, and I am currently incarcerated here in prison as I write this letter. My release date is July 25th, 2006, and I would live to stay in touch with all of you until then. Maybe even after release? You know, a progress report? I love to write! I also write poetry and draw from time to time.

I am enclosing a piece of poetry that you may publish in your publication. You may publish this letter as well if you wish to do so.

Anyways, I was wondering if you had any advice or opinions of direction I might want to take in acquiring any and all info on my dream of being a mentor or some type of youth counselor.

I am an ex-gang member, ex-drug user, and experienced much of a life of crime — and life behind these prison walls. I am not a sex offender nor do I have anything of that matter on my rap sheet. Any info you have I will greatly appreciate.

Thank you for your time, and please enjoy this poem that I wrote. I plan on sending more if you like my style.

Everybody wants to be labeled a gangsta; branded a thug. Nowadays you must be a "killa" to earn respect. Growing up, all my surrounding peers shared that same notion. As I sit here at my desk, enclosed inside this box that I'm issued from this county, I realize the consequences of my ignorance.

check out the rest of Adnan Khan's BWO piece on page 48

